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THE PROBLEMS OF  
EDUCATION IN BENGAL

*By the Same Author*  
SIR ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE—A STUDY  
*With a Foreword by*  
SIR C. V. RAMAN  
*and an Introduction by*  
SIR P. C. RAY

# THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION IN BENGAL

*WITH A FOREWORD BY*  
SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN

AND

*AN INTRODUCTION BY*  
DR. SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE

PROBODH CHANDRA SINHA  
AUTHOR OF 'SIR ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE—A STUDY'

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*To*

SIR MANMATHANATH MUKERJI

*The crowded hours of whose glorious life tend to  
'correct the delirium of the animal spirits, make us  
considerate, and engage us to new aims and powers'.*





## PREFACE

A study of the outstanding problems in the field of public education in India needs no apology from a student of contemporary history ; it has become a truism to say that they are immense, urgent, and complicated—apart from the confusion wrought in the realm of educational aims and ideals following the conflict of cultures and ideology in the national and international spheres. Hence the author's aim has been to search for a solution of this fatal conflict in the haven of educational ideals and philosophy ; but the problems have to be dealt with in their historical setting and in their relation to social and cultural progress, in the light of universal values.

The author had originally no intention of embarking upon another literary venture, though a good many years had elapsed since his first effort ; but then the Secondary Education Bill has brought in a new and menacing factor in the already grave and complex educational situation in Bengal. The need for a serious and comprehensive work on the acute educational problems—which have been practically left untouched by the present Bill—was felt ; the author is under no delusion that the present work meets this national need fully ; but he hopes that it is a step in this direction ; naturally, it deals more particularly with secondary education in Bengal.

No work can escape bearing the impress of the circumstances through which it passes out ; the present artificial stage of our social development is surely not conducive to serious literary and research work—except in very limited circle ; but the author cannot, on this account, seek the indulgence of the public over the imperfections remaining in the book, which he sincerely regrets.

At the conclusion, to-day, of his arduous task, the author recalls, with an overwhelming sense of gratefulness, how even in the midst of unusual anxieties and worries Sir Manmathanath Mukerji has been the mainspring of his inspiration—an unfailing source of sustaining strength ; how Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, despite the pre-occupations of their crowded public life, have found it possible to take sympathetic interest in it. Nor can he conclude without expressing his profound gratitude to Sir P. C. Ray, Sir N. N. Sircar, Mr. Justice C. C. Biswas, Rev. Dr. P. G. Bridge, Dr. R. Ahmed, and Sir Maurice Gwyer ; he, however, feels he must leave unnamed his many personal friends whose help and kindness sustained him during the last anxious months ; but he must pay his tribute to the generous public spirit and promptitude of Sree Saraswaty Press and its able staff—particularly to Sj. Sailendranath Guha Ray.

Once more, most that comes rushing to his mind at the end of his labours, must remain unsaid. He concludes trusting on

‘That light whose smile kindles the universe,  
That beauty in which all things work and move,  
That benediction which the eclipsing curse,  
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love  
Which, through the web of being blindly wove  
By man and beast, and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst, . . . .’

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## FOREWORD

Mr. Probodh Sinha has written an absorbingly interesting work on the problems of the education in our country. In a sense the book is a tract for the times. It refers to the present controversy about the Bengal Secondary Education Bill and deals with it with a great deal of feeling. I have no doubt that those who are responsible for the educational administration of Bengal will notice the passionate resentment which the Bill has provoked among the Hindus, to which our author gives expression and try to introduce modifications which will appease the opposition.

To us, the more important part of the book is that which relates to educational ideals. The conflicts which have become so acute recently in economics and politics and other spheres of human life have also affected educational theory and practice. The writer makes a serious attempt to clarify the confusion. Despite some questions which he touches lightly or leaves unanswered, it is one of the most refreshing and significant analyses of educational ideals from the standpoint of a higher philosophy that has appeared in recent years.

It is a platitude to say that the progress of the country depends on education. It is the one way to the physical, economic and moral uplift of the people, for progress in health and sanitation and social reforms. The Indian people are keen and eager to avail themselves of all educational opportunities. The system of education that has prevailed in this country is far from satisfactory, especially in the sphere of secondary education. Cheap and ill-equipped schools have sprung up to cater to the large demand for secondary education. The large majority who drop off at the completion of the secondary stage are not given adequate training to earn a livelihood nor are they trained for citizenship. Nothing is done to touch their inner being or satisfy their emotional needs. There should be vocational

training in all secondary schools, and it will be useful even for those who take to literary pursuits at the University stage.

I do not suggest that education must have a utilitarian objective, that all that we are taught must be of use in the sense of immediate applicability to the practical problems of life. It is essential that we should find a job, that we must fit into the economic system, must adjust ourselves to the social environment. At the same time we must also have the capacity to criticise the social environment, the economic order, if they are defective and create new forms. Intellectual satisfaction, artistic enjoyment enrich human life and happiness. Pure sciences, higher mathematics, speculative philosophy, literature and fine arts may not be 'useful' in the vulgar sense of the word but give us a peace that the practical world can neither give nor take away. We must dream dreams, and see visions, if we are not to go mad and perish as human beings. We need the education of the spirit, which helps us to raise the mind and increase sensitiveness and taste. The individual has a value for himself and in himself, apart from any direct reference to society. The Indian ideal insists on *brahmacharya*, and aims at producing men who see more broadly and more profoundly than others, to greater heights and longer distances in space and time, who comprehend the passing forms of life under the enduring truths of spirit. The Indian scheme does not neglect the possibilities of life but helps us to transform the actual into an image of the spiritual. Spiritual values are neither national nor international but universal. Insistence on these universal ends is the necessary corrective to the national schemes which, by a miseducation, have brought this world into the present chaos and anarchy.

Benares,

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

The 14th July, 1941.

## INTRODUCTION

History records how since the dawn of civilization attempts have been made to solve the mysteries of Nature and to harness her forces, and utilise her bounties to man's best advantage and thus to make man's life more and more worth living. The ancient sages dived deep into the philosophy of life and modern thinkers have contributed not a little to the unravelling of the science of life. The one dominating thought, however, has always been how to give a proper lead to the future generations to carry the torch of light and to transmit it to their successors, its brilliance radiating in all directions as centuries roll on. Needless to say, education of the child and of the youth came to be recognised as the chief means of ensuring continuity of that enquiring mind of a seer which alone could enliven the spirit of Man. As the States were formed, they felt the need of education of the youth as vital to their growth, nay, their very existence.

With the growth of civilization and since the evolution of governmental system for management and co-ordination of affairs of humanity in its struggle for existence and its forward march to its higher destiny, Education has always been considered to be an essential and an integral part of the State's function. Is there any wonder then that in free countries we find to-day unstinted efforts of their governments for the education of the young and the adult, *i.e.*, for systematic instruction and training given to them, in preparing them for the work of life? While education is imparted to make them fit for what is euphemistically called better citizenship, it is essentially the means to draw out their latent faculties and to prepare them in their struggle

for existence and for a nobler life and a better world-order. So viewed, the importance of education in a country long under foreign domination becomes all the more abiding. If in Bengal, nay in India, taking a panoramic view of the last one hundred years, we find an array of great thinkers and gallant patriots devoting their thought and energies to the problems of education of the children and youths of the country, our hearts pulsate with new vigour and we are led to hope that given proper lead in the sphere of education, our future generations will survive in their struggle for existence, and advance to this higher destiny that awaits them in future.

In a dependent country where education is not considered by the foreign government as a primary charge upon the public revenues, the magnitude of the problems of education can hardly be encompassed without a serious study of the difficulties that confront us to-day. The author has taken great pains to study the problems in the fields of education and culture, with special reference to the conditions now prevailing in Bengal, with that devoted application which alone could give him the enlightened vision necessary to grapple with them. In his earlier work on the life of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee he gave abundant signs of an enquiring mind and a catholic spirit in trying to penetrate into the spirit of Sir Asutosh's life and life-work as an educational reformer on the background of our national history. In the present volume, his searching enquiries, his historical review of the progress of education in this country during the last one hundred years, his at times trenchant criticisms of the Government's palpable indifference, his appreciation of the efforts of the Sadler Commission, and his references to the educationists and public men who have thrown distinct light on the problems of education are



well worth perusing. While the author has taken particular care in laying before the public how educational movements have developed in this country after the advent of the British and as a result of impact of Western thought and culture, he has not failed to draw the attention of the readers to those defects which have stood, and still stand, in the way of real and substantial progress. The author's deep insight into the educational problems with which we, in Bengal, are faced to-day, is reflected in the pages that he has devoted to a critical study of the revelant records, such as the Wood Despatch, and the Reports of the Indian Education Commission, Indian Universities Commission, Sadler Commission, Hartog Committee, and Simon Commission.

In so important, vast and intricate a subject as that of Secondary Education in Bengal, there may not be unanimity of views on the various problems ; but on the main questions at issue, the author may rightly claim the support of serious educational thought. The book is well-documented ; and if there are to be found copious quotations throughout the book, the author has done well in placing before the readers indisputable facts and authentic materials. The author has shown how, as contrasted with private enterprise which has practically built up the entire system of secondary education, there have been very little State encouragement in this direction up to the present day and practically no sustained and serious efforts from the Government to put the system of education on a sound footing. The author has devoted several chapters to the various pressing problems requiring the attention of the public for their solution in order that Bengal may occupy the pre-eminent place which was once hers, in the cultural life of India, and in the work of uplifting India from her present bondage, political, economic and social. But this devout consummation will be a far off

reality without the resuscitation of our secondary education from its dangerous and moribund state, and this again is an impossibility without, as the author avers, the necessary improvement of the deplorable condition of service in the profession of teaching, as it is actually frustrating the educational progress of Bengal.

Apart, however, from the imperative necessities of the immediate present, the educational situation in our country presents us with problems in our cultural sphere and in our larger life which are perhaps more serious and profound, even though they do not lie on 'the surfaces of life'. As Sir Michael Sadler so pithily put it in the course of an illuminating article ten years after his departure from India, " . . . Behind all questions of education policy lie the problems of social philosophy. What was it, each of us was asking himself, what was it that Bengal needs? What is her destiny as a province of India and as one of the peoples of the world? For what fate, for what form of ultimate responsibility must the boys and girls, the young men and women of Bengal be prepared? To what goal beyond the horizon leads the road of education in Bengal?" Whosoever might feel called upon to grapple with the big problems that face us in the field of education in Bengal, whoever might take upon himself the task of chalking and carrying out the long deferred reforms, or to frame a fruitful, constructive policy, must answer these 'fundamental questions' and shape his course of action accordingly.

The author's is perhaps the first attempt in the field to collate the very valuable data from the different sources. His more than a running commentary on the Sadler Commission will be very helpful in removing serious misapprehensions of the public in regard to the actual recommendations in their Report about Secondary Education. While the author commends to the public the conception of the character and

the function of the 'new education', as planned by the Sadler Commission, in the secondary stage, he also claims the right to criticise some crucial points, such as the constitution of the Board of Secondary Education, where in his opinion the recommendations of the Sadler Commission are either out of date and therefore unsuitable or are defective or otherwise unworkable. His suggestion for the position of the President of the Board to be filled by men of outstanding eminence in public life and enjoying the confidence of the public deserves serious attention and is calculated to ensure the independence of the Board, on which so much emphasis was laid by the Sadler Commission. In this country, more than anywhere else, the freedom of education has to be preserved and it must not be made the sporting-field of party politics or of communal feuds.

The author has stressed the need for newer aims for secondary education and for newer ideals for education and culture in general. His reference to India's ancient culture based on deep religious outlook in the matter of education and his insistence on the reign of the spiritual and the moral in our academic affairs are significant. He has freely drawn his inspirations from Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo as well as from Swami Vivekananda, Sir Gooroo Das, Sir Asutosh and Dr. Annie Besant on the subject of national education and has pleaded strongly for a spiritual and moral tone in education. He has, at the same time, emphasised that in any system of Secondary Education, the question of industrial regeneration as also of cultural renaissance of the country should always be kept in view. In pleading for newer aims and ideals in education, and for a cultural synthesis, in order that cultural advance of the whole community may be fostered by and through education, in order that education and culture might once again reign as a dynamic force in national life, invigorating, uplifting and



# The Problems of Education

## IN

# Bengal

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### CHAPTER I

#### THE NATURE AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEMS

Importance of the role of Education in a tottering, changing world-order—Our educational system—Ministerial onslaught thereon—Government of India's views in 1919—Sir Sankaran Nair's Minute of Dissent—The fallacy in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' in the Government Bill—The Wood Despatch as the determining factor in all subsequent progress—Sadler Commission's verdict—Ministerial control and after—The rise of the University and public apathy—Failure of the public to face the Problem.

The importance of building and maintaining a sound, autonomous and thriving system of popular and higher education on broad national lines, well-planned—so as to meet the needs of the age and the country and be in intimate touch with the life of the people and the progress of the humanity—and duly supported by the state as a major national concern, can hardly be overestimated ; nay, it is indispensable in the present epoch of world-history when humanity stands at the crossing of ways with its political and social structures, even its ideas and values, in the melting pot as a result of the catastrophic conflict of international aims and the uncontrollable impact of aimless progress.

Scarcely has a generation passed away since humanity was plunged headlong into a world-wide conflagration which destroyed the work and ideas of a century, when humanity is once more confronted with what threatens to be another world-war on the 'surfaces of life' but what really is the inevitable explosion of the unbridled and aggressive nationalism, of the unbalanced ascendancy of individualism, and the mortal conflict of the militant cultures in Europe. Once more in the abysmal depth of spiritual despair and moral bankruptcy, intellectual perversity and social crisis, humanity finds its milestones of progress and the lights of Civilization and Culture in a process of extinction in the senseless orgy of violence and destruction, in the mad rush of man's naked and untamed animality, bringing untold misery to millions. But this 'collapse of civilization' in Europe cannot ring out civilization from our old familiar earth ; nor has nature exhausted the possibilities of her 'creative evolution' on the human plane. Long before this devastating war had broken out in Europe, there were unmistakable currents in European life and thought which pointed to the struggling emergence of newer ideals, values and principles.

Behind the scenes of this drama of destruction, this 'Kurukshetra' in Europe, Nature's creative urge has been at work and society and civilization have been in the throes of a new birth ; during a period like this, Man's last haven, his safest shelter, is Education and Culture ; but his culture and heritage, intellectual and spiritual, will be a mirage, a delusion, unless supported by a thriving system of popular and higher education, based upon a lofty national policy and an inspiring and universal ideal ; apart from the gathering gloom of the world-tragedy, no country, no community, in the present age of ascendancy of science, of unceasing rivalry and unrelenting exploitation of the weak by the

strong, can afford to be without a well-developed system of education. But to be true to the spirit of catholicity in our culture, India's educational system must not work within or sustain a narrow egoism or selfish nationalism fatal to social progress and world-peace but must attempt to revive the undying universalism in her civilization and culture. It is needless to point out that in the herculean task of building up of the new humanity and the new world-order which, thanks to the creative urge in Nature, were slowly emerging out of the wreckage wrought by the last War, and which must necessarily follow the present War, whatever the latter's political and economic consequences might be, Education, properly understood and properly developed, will play a greater part than anything else. Nearer home, in India too, Education and Culture, if truly directed and properly spread, will mould the shape of things to come so as to contribute immensely not simply to national progress and well-being but also to international harmony and prosperity.

The European educational systems—specially the English—which have done so much to raise the intellectual and cultural level and bring varied educational opportunities within the reach of the masses, deserve all praise ; they have also served as a model to various countries in the East—more particularly, the English system, so far as India is concerned ; but it has not escaped strong criticisms at the hands of eminent thinkers. Bernard Shaw wrote some years back, “. . . indeed it is the insufficiency and sham of the educational side of our schools . . . . that save us from being dashed on the rocks of false doctrine instead of drifting down the midstream of mere ignorance. There is no way out through the school master . . . .” If this strong criticism could be hurled on the European, and the English, system, it is only natural that the system of education which

had been engrafted on to our soil as a foreign plant and left to languish for decades, will be severely criticised for its failure in the long run to serve the purpose, or suffice in the place, of national education in native soil. But in spite of just and voluminous criticism, it has not wholly failed—it was a great factor in India's uplift ; so it served its purpose in a way ; it must not be brushed aside without its meed of appreciation. For one thing, the new India, the new humanity in India, the upper and middle classes which give the torch-bearers of progress and culture everywhere as well as the leaders and pioneers who through their life and life-work have heralded the birth of India of to-day and of the morrow, are the product of impact of cultures and ideals, as well as of the working of the educational movement.

This educational system has been divided, for administrative purposes, into three principal stages so that each stage could be better moulded and worked in the light of the requirements of those for whom it is meant ; of these divisions, the secondary stage might be said to be the cornerstone of the whole system, the primary stage necessarily forming the base, and the University, its crown ; the stage of secondary education, however, from its peculiar intermediary position, claiming neither the universal allegiance of nation's juvenile population like the primary stage, nor the brilliant superstructure and glorious achievements of the University stage, has received in our country scanty attention at the hands of the Government, and a modicum of the necessary enlightened support from the public, though it was the pioneering and enterprising spirits from the ranks of the latter, who, urged by a sense of public duty and a call to diffuse the light of knowledge, had taken upon themselves to develop, expand and work the system of secondary education in Bengal. The vast



resources of the state as well as the maturer enthusiasm of the nation's intellectuals it had failed to attract for its proper development and better working ; and the result, naturally, has been disastrous, as continued neglect of a major sphere of national activities is bound to be. Sound and abiding national progress which it is the cardinal purpose of educational development to further and ensure and consolidate, will be an impossibility if undue stress is laid on the base or the superstructure and the intermediary stage—which is of vital importance to both—is relegated to the cold shade of neglect and apathy. Neither the primary stage—the base—nor even the University, can properly function, far less bring about the highest fruition in its own sphere, unless both of them are strengthened and inter-connected with an effective and progressive system of popular and liberal secondary education.

Entrenched in their power behind their solid majority in the Legislature from which no appeal to the electorate—however successful—by any party, could dislodge them, the present reactionary Ministry in Bengal has launched upon a course of anti-Hindu, anti-national and frankly retrograde legislative measures ; after laying their violent hands on, and smashing, the grand civic structure in Calcutta, representing as it did the fulfilment of the life-work and life's dream of that hoary-headed statesman of Bengal—the greatest orator of Modern India—they have put on the anvil, a grossly reactionary, brutally communal, and mischievous tinkering Bill apparently for, and in the name of better planning and reformation of, secondary education in Bengal but really aiming at transferring to a communal Board, and to the Government ultimately, the control and direction in the all-important field of secondary education in Bengal. But this black Bill, as it is called, has produced a miraculous effect on the public life so far as the Hindus and other

enlightened communities, such as the Indian Christians, are concerned. The Hindus of Bengal, who practically have built and have been working the system with their very life blood, have risen to a man against this mischievous measure, closing up their ranks and forgetting their party-politics ; they are too much alive to the importance of freedom in secondary education to consent to hand it over to an unknown Board constituted on communal basis. The Ministry which is capable of treating this vital nation-building subject so lightly and can be so brazen-facedly vindictive, will, it is no wonder, try to belittle the tremendous opposition against the Bill, as also the grounds it is based on ; but the situation is grave. "India stands to-day in a critical position ; her immediate future, apart from her slower political growth, depends upon the solution of social, economic and industrial, problems to which a good system of secondary education is the chief key.† If we handed it over, at this juncture, to untried hands we should be guilty of grave dereliction of duty." These pregnant words which were used not by any irresponsible politicians or professional agitators, but by the Government of India itself in the course of an important despatch to the Secretary of State in 1919, can be applied with greater force to the present situation in Bengal, particularly with reference to the ill-conceived and frankly reactionary measure introduced in the Assembly to replace the existing system of secondary education. If this system, as is admitted, has outlived its days of efficiency and utility, the measure that is on the Legislative anvil has been conceived in a spirit of utter hostility to the interests of overwhelming majority of those whom it is intended to serve, and in utter defiance of their wishes. In the words of the Government of India of 1919 the latter think it would be sheer "dereliction of duty" to hand it over to "untried" and hostile hands.

In the din and dust of controversy which must follow, as a matter of course, the situation created by the series of vindictive and retrograde legislative measures of the communal Ministry—which has broken the universal convention of refraining from controversial measures in the midst of a gigantic War when the destinies even of the British Empire are hanging in the balance—it is difficult to discuss dispassionately and fully so comprehensive, so complicated and so momentous a question as that of reforming and re-building the system of secondary education. As Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru observed the other day with reference to the work of National Planning Committee, “I have been associated with the work of the National Planning Committee for nearly two years and the conviction is growing upon me that it is not possible to deal with a major problem here separately”; for one thing no department of the State can, during these days, work in isolation ; for another, in the present stage of our political and social deterioration, it is not possible to pick up one particular item of reform and carry it out by itself ; so it is incumbent upon us to rise above the controversial atmosphere and try to have a comprehensive picture of the relevant facts and guiding factors in the field of secondary education which has been long neglected both by the state and the people and where there is urgent need of a thorough reconstruction of the existing system and a complete re-orientation of the policy and the ideal pursued so long. Secondly, the Government Bill touches, however indifferently, a fringe of the Problem only ; it has been discussed threadbare in the press and on the platform and we do not propose to refer to it in detail at this stage but would concentrate our thoughts on, and draw public attention to, the numerous and glaring defects in the system which are eating into the vitals of the entire body-politic and sapping the very foundation of national well-being and

are adding to the complexities and difficulties of the Problem. Any sane Government, popular or autocratic, would have harnessed to the cause of educational regeneration of the country its enlightened public opinion which is not wedded to *status quo* in the vast and vital sphere of education, particularly of secondary education in Bengal.

The main features of the system introduced nearly a century ago were based upon a century-old policy which is an absurd anachronism to-day ; they have been known to the successive Governments to be long out of date and to act as dead-weight in the system and strike at the root of real progress. As the Government of India quoted from one of their reports more than 20 years ago, "It is impossible that a syndicate sitting in Calcutta should control 789 schools distributed over an area of 78.699 square miles. Rules become relaxed, orders are evaded and the influence of inspecting staff is weakened . . . In the first place, the apparently inexhaustible demand for secondary education combined with the difficulty of meeting it in an adequate manner, tends to swamp the effects of reform. Existing schools are improved ; but new ones spring up, lowering the average of attainment and undermining discipline. The most necessary ingredients of education, such as discipline, social life, good physical conditions and a reasonable standard of classwork, are not demanded and therefore not supplied." In the course of these twenty years that have passed since then, both the structure of, and the policy underlying, the system of secondary education remain unchanged, and the situation has only changed in degree, not in kind, the number of institutions having doubled ; hence those remarks are quite applicable even now. It is interesting, in this

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\*Prominent features of the Bill and the public criticism against it are given in Appendix 'A'.

connection, to refer to what the Government of India said in respect of the responsibility for the errors and failures of the past. "Before leaving this subject", they wrote to the Secretary of State, "we may revert to the argument that our educational policy has not been a success in the past. That it has at times been lacking in foresight and perspective we do not deny. During the lean years education received only such funds as were available after more imperious demands have been satisfied. . . . In making the distribution which they did, our predecessors . . . . took little account of the need of building a sound and well-proportioned system adapted to the economic and political needs of the country as a whole. . . . We admit the errors of the past. . . ." No comment is necessary after this frank admission of the very highest authority in India, which must throw a flood of light on the subsequent development and accumulated evils of the system ; we would only refer to what one of their distinguished colleagues had to say in the matter on that important occasion—the then Member-in-Charge of Education in the Government of India, who could not, by the remotest stretch of imagination or language, be called and classed as an agitator.

"They (the Government) have themselves", wrote Sir Sankaran Nair in the course of historic Minutes of Dissent to the same Despatch, "no scheme of education in view and their predecessors have been going on making experiment after experiment all in the face of Indian protest, which they themselves admitted have ended in failure. . . . A retrograde policy has been followed since Lord Dufferin's time. . . . The results on secondary and collegiate education were deplorable. National education not being recognised by Government as an obligation, the pupils were left to study in such schools and Colleges as were maintained by private efforts. Such schools were inadequate in number

to receive the crowds who were seeking admission. Institutions multiplied to meet the ever growing demand. Government grants were given to the institutions which complied with its rules which were designed to secure efficiency. The other institutions failed to secure competent teachers. This again stood in the way of Government grant. A large number of inefficient institutions with incompetent teachers was the natural results of a system which does not recognise education as a national obligation but only aids private efforts by 'doles'.. . . Efforts were then made by the Government to confine higher education, and secondary education leading to higher education, to boys in affluent circumstances. This again was done not in the interests of sound education but for political reasons. Rules were made calculated to restrict the diffusion of education generally and among the poorer sections in particular. Conditions recognizing fitness for "grants"—stiff and various—were laid down and enforced and the non-fulfilment of any of these conditions was liable to be followed by serious consequences. Fees were raised to a degree which, considering the circumstances of the classes that resort to schools, were abnormal. When it was objected that the minimum fee would be a great hardship to the poor students, the answer was—such students had no business to receive that kind of education. Managers of private schools who remitted fees in whole or part were penalised by reduced grants-in-aid. These rules had undoubtedly the effect of checking the great expansion of education that would have taken place. This is the real explanation of the very unsatisfactory character and nature of the progress of secondary education ; and it will be never remedied until we are prepared either to give education to the boys ourselves or to make sufficient grants to the private schools to enable them to be staffed with competent teachers. We are, at present, prepared to

do neither. English education according to this policy is to be confined to the well-to-do classes. They, it was believed, would give no trouble to Government."

This most authoritative exposition of the Government policy and of 'the deplorable results' that followed this "retrograde policy" needs no comments at our hands to have more lurid light on this most tragic chapter of the British rule in India, as we shall refer to other Governmental authorities as we discuss the subsequent developments and the accumulation of the evils generating, and multiplying, in and from, the system so long ; only, we have just seen the workings of the official mind which planned and worked the system in the earlier stages. So it is not quite correct to say, as has been said in the Statement of Objects and Reasons by the Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge in connection with the present Bill, "that Secondary Education in Bengal is at present uncontrolled. There is no authority with power to regulate development according to a planned scheme. . . ." The Government had deliberately adopted and pursued a particular policy and wanted certain results in the field of education to follow and they did not concern themselves any more in the matter, as our quotations have shown. How far educational expansion in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, could have been differently directed and properly supported and planned is another matter, which we propose to discuss at a later stage.

The present 'uncontrolled' and unplanned 'development' in all its ramifications and in all its 'deplorable' and disastrous consequences has to be traced to the Wood Despatch and to the Act of Incorporation which followed it ; as the Simon Commission said reviewing the Report of their Education (Auxiliary) Committee, "Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854 opened a new chapter ; it determined the whole subsequent course of Indian educational development

by imposing upon the Government of India the duty of creating a properly articulated system of education from the Primary school to the University. . . . Our Auxiliary Committee, in its review, points out that all subsequent stages may be regarded as a development of the policy laid down rather than as departures therefrom. . . ." Nor has there been any serious or radical or even important departure in the old policy since the provincial Government took over full control, in the educational field, from the Government of India. After half a century of the working of the Act of Incorporation the Indian Universities Act was passed in the teeth of tremendous opposition of the Indians, which placed the Universities, to quote again from Sir Sankaran Nair, "under the unduly rigid control of the Government" and provided for "far too much detailed Government intervention", without seeking properly to remove the admittedly serious defects of the system or putting adequate funds in the hands of competent but struggling non-official agencies that were carrying on the torch of learning in the most depressing circumstances, owing to financial stringency. Years that followed before the Sadler Commission reported, had seen a good deal of accumulation of existing evils of the system till the situation became extremely grave and menacing ; we shall have to revert to some very sad aspects of the situation at a later stage ; but with the moribund functioning of an worn-out system producing "deplorable results" and the deliberate adoption of an ill-conceived, un-natural and disastrous policy in so vital a sphere of life as education and letting it remain unrelated to the growing and stern realities of life in India and abroad, the ship of education was left out of its natural moorings ; it steadily drifted away from the surging tide of the newly born renaissance, from the sweeping onrush of the glorious national awakening and political upheaval on the one hand, and



from the necessary adjustment to the new economic factors, on the other, which no thriving system of education can afford to neglect.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the Sadler Commission had to remark, . . . . "It is impossible not to recognise that a system which leads to such results (humble status and low pay of the graduates) must be economically wasteful and socially dangerous and must in the end lead to the intellectual impoverishment of the country. . . ." It is a pity that the Hon'ble Minister would refer, in all innocence to the "uncontrolled" and unplanned expansion in the field of secondary education without caring to enquire into the genesis of, and the factors governing, this expansion. We have already referred to the lucid and important review made by Sir Sankaran Nair, which clearly discloses the determining factors of this expansion ; the main cause of this expansion which the Hon'ble Minister has overlooked, has been, to quote the pregnant words of the Sadler Report, "the growing demand of the people of Bengal for educational facilities which is one of the most impressive features of our age. It is in itself altogether healthy and admirable. . . ." This expansion—this demand for educational facilities—has followed a great cultural and intellectual Movement that has been sweeping over the land broadening men's outlook, enlarging their horizon and infusing a new life and vigour into them. This expansion was inevitable and it is useless to murmur over it ; even the long neglected rural classes left their traditional seclusion and adopted "academic ambitions". And "adoption of academic ambitions", observed Dr. Sadler and his colleagues, "even by a small portion of the cultivating classes is an event of great moment in the social history of Bengal ; it may be the herald of a social revolution. . . ."

If the disease in the system is dangerous, the remedy

proposed in the present Government Bill is quite wide of the mark and unrelated to the disease. The fact of the matter is that few take the problem of the reformation and rebuilding of the system of education seriously ; neither the Government, nor the educationists, nor even the Universities which, of course, could not strictly be held responsible for the 'deplorable results' have shown themselves sufficiently alive to the perils and pitfalls that confronted the country in the field of education ; but the disease, the problem, in the meantime, has been assuming dangerous proportions and have become complicated in its nature. The European agencies responsible for about three-quarters of a century for the direction of the policy pursued as well as for controlling the working of the system—and as such, responsible also for the glaring defects and serious "errors" which their spokesmen had the grace to acknowledge—had been replaced by Indians ; and no one could be fairer to them than the Simon Commission were in reviewing their work. . . . "It is only fair to the Ministers to say," observed the Statutory Commissioners, "quite plainly that in our opinion, the system which they inherited was far from satisfactory and that no fair estimate of their achievement can be made unless large allowance is made for this initial handicap. . . ." From this opinion no fair-minded man will have reasons to differ, if only the Ministers would range themselves on the side of progress, and not against it, and would, within their own limitations, personal, statutory and financial, take all possible steps to mitigate the serious evils of the system which seriously react on both the public and the academic life of the country ; but unfortunately, in Bengal, more than one Minister behaved in a strange and contrary way and proved reactionary ; but we will not discuss the Minister now. One cannot help stating that posterity will not spare the Indians, officials

as well as non-officials—just as impartial critics and observers of the present generation do not, cannot, spare the European officials of the past—for not putting their heads together and not making the requisite attempt at solving the great national problem of education, which was laid bare in all its multifarious and dangerous aspects by the Sadler Commission, specially after the powers of control and initiative had passed from European, to Indian, hands.

All India is grateful for Bengal's academic lead resulting in the meteoric rise of the Teaching and Research University in Calcutta under the inspired leadership of that brilliant and versatile personality, the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee ; he had gathered round him under the protecting wings of the University a unique combination of talents and geniuses in almost all departments of Arts and Sciences and Law, and thus, by their contribution, won our motherland an honoured place in the republic of Letters and Science abroad.

With the exception of this great and glorious instance no serious efforts were made to solve the most pressing of national problems ; no indication of concerted action, nor even of proper realization of the magnitude and urgency of the problem was forthcoming, even though its solution held and holds the key to so much of national life and well-being. A major responsibility for this disastrous failure must belong to the Governments of the day, more than half of which was manned by Indians, as well as to the Legislature which pretended to be the custodian of public funds and the repository of public spirit. It is useless to say that the Ministers were powerless and handicapped for want of funds and that proper atmosphere was lacking. The historic achievement of (Sir) Surendranath in a vital sphere of national life in placing on the Statute Book India's greatest charter of local self-Government in recent times was the

proof positive of the possibilities of great and constructive statesmanship even within the then limitations. Posterity will assign all the more credit to Bengal's veteran statesman for this monumental work because it involved patient and protracted legislation which was carried out when the country was seething with deep discontent and the Government was reaping the aftermath of Non-Co-Operation Movement ; so neither the Government as a whole, nor the Governor or his Ministers, nor even the Legislature could take shelter under the old plea of pre-occupations due to virulent agitation or subversive activities of some dangerous and misguided youths. On the other hand, the people of Bengal, at any rate, the thinking sections were lulled into a sense of false security by the multiplication of schools and colleges from which an increasing flow of graduates and under-graduates streamed forth ; they were hypnotized, as it were, by the rise of the brilliant superstructure, the dazzling crown of the educational edifice—the University—and its striking achievements and development so that the immensity and urgency of the problem of educational reform and re-construction eluded them. If the 'reformed' Government failed in their duty in this important matter, the public were lulled into sleep over the precipice ; it seems, the necessary, active educational consciousness, like the civic and political, was yet to dawn in the public mind.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WORKING OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The peculiar situation in Bengal—Position of the Hindus and the Muslims in the educational system—Figures of Hindu and Muslim students in public institutions—Grave situation confronting the Muslims—Errors of the Muslims as a community—Their failure to 'crush the enduring influences of Hinduism'—Serious warning of the Vice-Chancellor—The Problem calls for a bold statesmanship—The Chief Minister's position—Sir Asutosh's prophetic speech at Lucknow—The Ministry ignores the Sadler Report—Failure of previous attempts to check national progress—Prof. Rushbrook Williams' 'indictment against the structure of secondary education'—Simon Commission's review—Their final verdict.

Nowhere in the world is it possible to have a well-planned and well-developed system of education working in fair fruition, without the fullest collaboration between the people and the Government ; there might be big state Universities and state-controlled educational systems ; but it is futile to expect them to bring about the desired results, if they are suffered to move in their own grooves, isolated from the life and activities of the people and unrelated to the realities of the body-politic. But the situation in India, specially in Bengal, is peculiar and intriguing ; here not only the direction and control but also the manning of the system in the key positions, were the monopoly of the European ruling classes whose interests were opposed to those of the children of the soil and who, as pointed out by Sir Sankaran Nair, 'opposed 'sound educational progress'. The problem here is complicated by the fact that commerce and industries of the country are mainly in European hands, who, thus dominate the economic life in the country ; and it is the

commercial and industrial concerns of the land in this progressive age, it is economic structure of the body-politic which alone can absorb the increasing outturn of the University and educational system, and can thus contribute to the smooth working of a sound educational system and a national educational policy, as is the case in advanced countries in Europe and America ; here in India, both the Government and the administration being European in character and complexion, the task of harnessing the good offices of industries and commerce to the service of the educational system, was not beyond the range of practical politics ; but unfortunately, as is natural in a foreign service, the necessary earnestness of purpose and the proper realization of their responsibilities—except to whittle down the constitutional advance—were wanting in official quarters. Two decades have gone by since Dr. Sadler and his eminent colleagues had reported ; but the situation in Bengal in the field of education practically remains unchanged except that there have been inevitable expansion and aggravation of the known evils ; in the circumstances, the elaborate survey and the comprehensive review made by the Sadler Commission hold good in essentials. It ought to have been clear to the meanest intelligence, it was forcibly pointed out by them, that the first essential of any workable and adequate solution of the long-neglected but gigantic problem is the complete collaboration between the Government and the people vitally affected as represented by their thinking and advanced sections ; this first essential has been ignored by the present Government like its predecessors.

In Bengal, the position is rather intriguing but simple ; the Hindus, who are a minority community not only supply the over-whelming majority of teachers and students—who fill the schools—but a vast majority of the schools themselves have been founded by them and are maintained by them,

in many cases, at a considerable sacrifice. But the majority community, the Muhammadans, who form just a little over 50% of the population—and this, under the unnatural provincial boundaries imposed by the ruling classes, who, in the words of Sir Sankaran Nair, “have hitherto opposed political, and sound, educational progress”—have grasped the political power with a vengeance ; not only so ; they seem to think that by passing an anti-Hindu Act in the Legislature with the help of their assured supporters in their party and in the European bloc, they shall have powers of direction and control in this vital nation-building sphere ; it is not, however, difficult to understand the working of their mind ; having kept themselves aloof from the movement of western education and culture, they were naturally left far behind the other communities in India who had, under the influence of Western education and culture, made rapid strides in material and intellectual progress ; and as such, they practically dominated the political field and public life of the country, though it must be admitted that in the Congress organization, there were several Muslim patriots and politicians who occupied positions of trust and responsibility, and even of pre-eminence till the emergence in the field of a driving and forceful personality in Sir Saiyad Muhammed proved a turning point in the situation ; and under his able guidance, the community, at first, its advance spirits, began to shake off its traditional antipathy to western education and to progress on western lines ; but the fact remained, notwithstanding some prominent leaders and some conspicuous figures, the community had—and still has—a tremendous lee-way to make up in the healthy race for progress that other communities in India had joined much earlier and in much more earnestness. The Simon Commission than whom nobody could be more cautious truly observed. . . . “They have found much difficulty in

realizing that in the altered conditions of time, if they are not to be outdistanced by other competitors, they must equip themselves with other weapons than those that proved sufficient in the days gone by to make their forefathers rulers of the land. . . ."

The Simon Commission's figures as to the Muslim students in the educational institutions of various grades are interesting. "In class I", they stated, "Muhammadans form 28.4% of the total of that class ; in class V they form only 17 per cent of the total. In the upper stages of education there is a further falling off. Whereas Muhammadan pupils in the primary stage represent 24.9 per cent of the total at that stage ; in the middle stage, they represent only 16 per cent and in the high stage of schools only 13.5 per cent, and at universities and arts colleges, only 13 per cent of the total number of students at such institutions." The figures from the Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for 1935-36 issued by the Government of Bengal in 1937—the year that saw the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy under which the Muhammadans were put into power—are also of more than passing interest. In the year under review, the Hindus numbered 11,299,914 and the Muhammadans, 14,200,142 and the number of Hindu and Muhammadan students 'receiving general education', was as follows:—

#### PRIMARY CLASSES

		<i>Hindus*</i>	<i>Muhammadans</i>
Class I	...	196,368	209,578
Class II	...	97,487	76,229
Class III	...	81,818	55,476
Class IV	...	57,102	25,225
Class V	...	54,681	18,799
			37,950

\*The second column of figures under this head applies to "Educationally Backward Classes" and the other, to the advanced classes.



## MIDDLE CLASSES

Class VI	...	42.897	7.847	17.785
Class VII	...	38.620	6.126	14.881

## HIGH CLASSES

Class VIII	...	30.299	3.099	10.936
Class IX	...	25.737	2.444	8.616
Class X	...	23.277	1.901	7.633
Class XI	...	23.920	1.569	7.162

## UNIVERSITY &amp; INTERMEDIATE

1st year	...	5.557	496	1,215
2nd year	...	6.829	597	1,337

## DEGREE CLASSES

1st year	...	2.784	190	528
2nd year	...	3.567	167	589
3rd year	...	38	2	43

## POST-GRADUATE CLASSES

1st year	...	594	9	74
2nd year	...	526	6	66

## RESEARCH STUDENTS

17

3

The number of Female scholars receiving General Education was as follows:—

## PRIMARY CLASSES

		<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muhammadans</i>
Class I	...	113.044	61.673
Class V	...	6.636	1.067

## MIDDLE CLASSES

5,699                  305                  534

## HIGH CLASSES

Class VIII	...	1,971	7	117
Class XI	...	841	6	34

## UNIVERSITY ETC.

Inter	...	731	3	17
Degree	...	337	1	11
P. G.	...	43		1
Research	...	1		0

The total number of Male and Female scholars receiving Vocational and Special Education in Law, Medicine, Education, Engineering, Agriculture, Commerce, Forestry, and Veterinary Science in the University and Intermediate courses were, respectively, Hindus, 4,438 & 48 and Muhammadans, 582 & 1. We shall have something to say about the figures in purely science courses at the University of Calcutta, to which pointed reference had been made by the Vice-Chancellor in last year's Convocation Speech. The more recent figures available do not alter the general picture presented here. The latest reports of Government and of the University afford interesting reading. Out of a total of 18,552 male students receiving University education in Calcutta, no less than 16,271 students come from the Hindu community, and only 1,742 from the Muslim; in the Muffasil colleges, there are 11,006 Hindu students as against 4,094 Muslim; so for every 5 Hindu students, there is only 1 Muslim, notwithstanding all special encouragements and scholarships to the latter. In the year 1938-39, the Hindus sent 74.5 per cent of the students to the High Schools (1,26,124) and the Muslims, 23.7 per cent, (40,268). The Government contributed only 15.8 per cent of the total expenditure on secondary and middle schools for boys in

1936—37, and only 15.7 per cent of the expenditure on boys' secondary schools in 1938-39, main burden being borne by the guardians and the boys, belonging to the Hindu community. No comment is necessary to throw into bolder relief the general picture that emerges out of the figures quoted here.

No statesman or politician or educationist, no public man or patriot, nor even any one imbibed with a true communal spirit could look on, with complacent equanimity, or belittle the gravity of, the situation that threatens the Muhammadans as a community ; love for one's community is not at all an evil if it seeks to promote the lasting interests of one's own community, which lie in and are bound up with the preservation of peace and harmony and good will in the body politic. But we have to seek elsewhere, the factors causing and fostering the aggressive and unbridled communalism and anti-national spirit that have prompted the reactionary, anti-Hindu measures launched by the present Ministry, the most sinister of which is the present Secondary Education Bill. It is nothing but a sheerest perversity of human nature and complete breakdown of reason and intelligence to antagonise, and wound the susceptibilities of, the Hindus in Bengal who are not only the children of the same soil but who, as pioneers and leaders in the important sphere of education, could have helped their Muhammadan fellow-subjects in the more gigantic and pressing problem of removing educational backwardness that has been staring them in the face all these years. But the Ministry and their henchmen in their communal party decided otherwise and determined, also, to ruthlessly demolish the structure in the field of education as they have partly done elsewhere—for which generations of Hindus have laboured and sacrificed ; how far they will be successful in the long run is another matter. Among the factors that have gone a long

way to give rise to communal vindictiveness in the Muhammadan population generally, the anti-national and centrifugal tendencies in the leaders and the worst communal passions and frenzies in the masses which have been resulting in tragic loss of innocent life and property on a considerable scale and are reflected in the re-actionary and anti-Hindu legislation in the Punjab and Bengal, the policy of undue preference to, and vulgar appeasement of, the Muhammadans pursued by the British ruling classes for the last half of a century, stands out most prominently. This ignominious policy not only brought into play the sinister principle of divide and rule, of setting one community against the other, but also bred in the Muhammadan masses a sense of immunity and a spirit of iniquity and defiance.

Intoxicated with a sense of their undue and unreal importance and propped up power, our Muhammadan friends have fallen into some very serious errors. They have turned a deaf ear to the lessons of History ; they have forgotten the Sepoy Mutiny and the relentless fate in the shape of British frightfulness that overtook them. They have forgotten, in the immediate enjoyment of patronage and preference at the cost of the Hindus, the stern fact that the British people are engaged in the soothing task of backing them and patting them on the back, not out of an excess of Christian charity or of the milk of human kindness for them but as a matter of policy and expediency—in order to punish the Hindus who have become too much troublesome and assertive. The other big mistake some of them committed was that they thought the Hindus could be crushed so easily by some vindictive legislative and administrative measures and even by widespread and inhuman communal murders and arsons—the Hindus with the immortal creative spirit of their culture and civilization, and the undying and

wonderful vitality of their religion and society, which stand as a rock against the crumbling down of world's old order, the Hindus who have just come out with flying colours from half-a-century of unceasing and unrelenting repression at the hands of one of the strongest of ruling classes on earth.

For the benefit of our misguided Muslim friends who are only too eager to knock out the Hindus from the arena at any cost, we quote these significant passages from the Report of no less a body than the Simon Commission. . . . "The splendid monuments of Mogul architecture stand as a perpetual reminder of the vanished domination of Muhammadan rule. Yet during the centuries when the material power of Islam was at its highest in India, it was quite unable to crush the enduring influences of Hinduism." It would only be fair to remark in passing, however, that there are some ardent spirits even among the prominent Muslims who are not slow to pay their tribute of respect to our hoary culture and religion. Religious bigotry and communal passions might mislead, and appeal to, the mass-mind but are a suicidal anomaly and anachronism in the legislative chamber in modern society ; it is the economic and political laws which have nothing to do with communal fanaticism and vindictiveness, which are the ruling factors in the affairs of men ; you cannot injure a sister community or a sister nation without injuring your best interests. But the Muslim communal leaders will not care either for the teachings of History, or for sound economic and political laws if the latter stand in the way of their vindictive legislation and cheap and apparent and elusory communal aggrandisement. The other grave blunder they are being rushed into is the tragic failure of the Muslim leaders and legislators to realize where their shortsighted, unnatural and vindictive communalism is landing them as a community. In spite of the

serious warning of the Simon Commission which we have already quoted they are misusing their political power and their undoubted abilities, where they exist, in pursuing a suicidal communal policy in Bengal—which has estranged the Hindus without whose willing co-operation they cannot thrive—and are not at all alive to the extreme seriousness of their position as a self-respecting and thriving community. In Bengal, the policy of preference to Muslims began with a vengeance with, and since, the Partition. For a period of twenty years that Education has been in charge of Indian Ministers, there was practically one Hindu Minister who had the Education portfolio for about three years and during the rest of all these years, it remained in Muslim hands. In this period, the Calcutta University, which occupies a prominent position in the field of education including secondary education, was under Hindu Vice-Chancellors for about eight years, under European for four years, and under Muslim, for more than seven years ; during this period, besides an Assistant Director of Public Instruction for Muhammadan Education, the Inspectorate was practically Muhammadanised. But what has been the response of the community to these uniformly favourable influences? What has been their reaction to the forces of progress in the field of education? What have been the quantity and quality of their cultural and intellectual outturn? Both the proportion and success of the Muslim boys and youths in the University halls and School-rooms—except at the lowest primary class—are not flattering to, or commensurate with, their numerical importance in Bengal.

The paucity is more glaring and grave in Science classes and courses. The last year's Convocation Address of the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University—who was a Minister of Education—threw lurid light on this aspect of the situation, which all well-wishers of the community will do well

to bear in mind. “. . . In connection with the problem of Muslim education”, said Sir M. Azizul Haque, “ I wish to draw the immediate attention of the Government and the public to the extreme paucity of Muslims in the Science classes. . . Within the last ten years the annual average number of Muslims who passed the Matriculation Examination is about 2.235 but the number that passed the I.Sc. Examination is only 96 while the number of Muslim B.Sc. graduates is only 18 on an average per year. There has been practically no rise in the number of Muslim Science graduates within the last ten years. The corresponding annual average for the Hindus is 1.646 for the I.Sc. and 501 for the B.Sc. examinations. The number of Muslim M.Sc.’s is extremely small ; in six years between 1933 and 1938 the total number of Muslims who passed the M.Sc. examinations is only 14 against 650 Hindus. . . .” Not that there are wanting state encouragement in the form of generous financial provisions and even some special and exclusive arrangements from the public funds. But the deplorable results indicated by the Vice-Chancellor which are fatal to the community sterilizing as they do, the mainsprings of cultural growth, and dwarfing healthy development on modern lines, which alone can save it in the inevitable and unmitigated struggle for existence imposed by modern life, point to serious tendencies not to be cured by trampling upon the rights of the Hindus and ignoring the inexorable laws of progress and decay controlling the rise and fall of communities and nations.

Something more than a mere vindictive and reactionary policy, a broad and bold constructive statesmanship and full and effective and harmonious collaboration and co-operation of all sections in the body politic, and protracted and patient toil on sound lines and in healthy atmosphere are needed to extricate the Muslims as a community in parti-

cular, and the country in general, from the yawning danger and imminent disaster in the domain of education. As we have already said, no sound educational system could be successfully worked so as to achieve the maximum results without the fullest collaboration and co-operation of all sections of the people, and to think of leaving aside the willing collaboration and help of the Hindus, not to harness their ripe experience and their constructive and organizing abilities to the cause of educational reform and expansion in Bengal, is to play the 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark. The bare and stern requirements of the situation in the sphere of public education in Bengal, which has been deteriorating from decade to decade, as has been forcibly pointed out by various authoritative Commissions and Committees and individual authorities, call for the exercise of the highest constructive statesmanship and the adoption of a bold state-policy ; the situation is long past playing and tinkering with. But, unfortunately for Bengal, the Ministers of Education here, unlike the veteran statesman who first took charge of the Department of Local Self-Government, were not outstanding figures, surely not equal to successfully grappling the gigantic problem of educational reform.

The present Minister of Education, himself the Chief-Minister with a standing majority behind him in both Houses of the Legislatures, held an eminent position in the public life, and as such, was ideally situated to solve, at any rate, to make a genuine attempt at solving, the standing problem. But as Fate would have it, he is not only a creature of his party but has broken all record in changing his allegiance to parties and principles in a short time ; he has evidently surrendered his better judgment and his political principles—if he had any—to suit the shifting sands of party politics and the blind communal passions and prejudices of his



party-men. While India is groaning under the weight of communal 'demands' and jealousies and frenzies and senseless communal crimes which will lower any community in the estimation of the civilized world, let us draw the attention of the public to the significant utterance of that seasoned statesman and the eminent patriot, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, ". . . I cannot overlook another aspect of the situation," said Sir Asutosh at Lucknow in 1924, "that the Minister is a creature of party politics. Even if he be, left to himself, inclined to behave as an enlightened man, he is bound to guide himself by the inclination of the party he has the privilege to represent." How truly prophetic this utterance has proved to be has been amply revealed by one who was Finance Minister in the present Ministry ; nor can Mr. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar be classed as an irresponsible politician, as has been admitted by his former Chief himself. The main reason, said Mr. Sarkar from his place in the Assembly, of his resignation from the Government was the fact that the Ministry had ceased to lead, but was being led and goaded into action by, the party and in consequence, an atmosphere was created which rendered a dispassionate consideration of legislative measures impossible.

But let us refer to the striking Lucknow speech of Sir Asutosh: "I shall not be surprised," he continued, "if a Muhammadan Minister of Education were driven to hold that as the present Professor of Indian History in the University of Lucknow is a pious Brahmin from Bengal, his successor should be an orthodox Muslim from the Punjab.\* His judgment might be unconsciously affected by the circum-

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\*Sir Asutosh's prophetic words had literally proved true ; a 'pious Brahmin' from Bengal had been bracketted with 'a Muslim from the Punjab' in important appointments in the Calcutta Improvement Trust. Muslims from outside Bengal have been given appointments for want of suitable Bengali Muslims.

stance that if he took up this position he would not only capture the support of his party, but would, in addition, place his salary beyond danger. We are followers of precedents, but we shall search in vain for a parallel from the Mother of Parliaments. We have yet to learn that the British House of Commons sits solemnly to discuss the details of University administration in Leeds, Manchester or Sheffield. . . I do not maintain that the Universities should stand aloof from the life of the Nation. Education is a sacred National Trust. The people who dedicate their lives in the cause of education work for the nation ; and it would be a calamity if they were completely isolated from the main stream of national activities."

The Hon'ble Minister of Education has innocently cited, in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' (attached to his present Bill), the authority of the Sadler Commission for the Board proposed in his Bill ; it is extremely doubtful if in the midst of the noise and bustle of his party politics and amidst the more than ordinary pre-occupations of his roving and interesting career—the veil of which is sometimes lifted—he has had time to go through, with the seriousness that the subject deserves, the masterly survey contained, and the comprehensive scheme of reforms that the Commission had recommended, in their most elaborate Report ; if he had, he would not have, in blissful innocence, invoked the authority of the Commission, ignoring not only the fundamental recommendations of that august body but also the spirit and what they deemed to be the pre-requisite—the foundation of the radical reforms they advocated. For one thing the scheme of reforms they proposed for the field of secondary education—in which they included the present Intermediate stage of the University also—is a complete whole ; it is so nicely balanced and so vitally inter-connected in its essential parts, so much

dependant upon some basic conditions that it is height of unwisdom, nay sheer madness, to tear from this organic whole, some proposals torn of their context, and mould them in communal spirit and character and try to foist them on the Hindu public through a standing majority in the legislature—ostensibly on the plea of planned and efficient development but really to have effective voice and control in the secondary educational system and over the hundreds of schools built by nearly a century of patient toils and sacrifice by the Hindus.

It is necessary to remind the Hon'ble Minister, the Ministry and their henchmen in the Legislature and in the Secretariat, of the fate of the notorious attempts of much mightier body of bureaucrats headed by that brilliant pro-consul, Lord Curzon, to control and checkmate our educational and national progress and awakening through the Indian Universities Act and the Partition of Bengal. Surely the present communal Ministry is not better situated to crush the Hindus and take over 'control' in what is practically regarded as sacred as the latter's hearth and home, than the Governments of Lords Curzon and Minto backed as they were by the British Government and the British public? The Hon'ble Minister and his Ministry would have been acclaimed by posterity as saviours if they could take courage in both hands and, rising above the communal clouds, could inaugurate and work the comprehensive scheme of reforms in the field of education, at any rate, of secondary education ; they could yet proceed in a patriotic spirit, to the big task of reconstruction on the basis of active help and good-will of the educationists in Bengal, supported by enlightened public opinion, by the teachers, promoters and managers of the majority of the institutions—as elaborately planned by the Sadler Commission, subject only to such modifications as would be dictated by further

experience and developments. But\* the Ministry is not only guilty of gravest sacrilege in trying to instal the Moloch of Communalism in the sacred temple of learning and education which supply the fountain-head of nationalism and patriotism and humanity—the basis of all social well-being and national progress ; but they are guilty also of half-heartedly tinkering with the gigantic problem ; probably, they are afraid of disturbing strong vested interests. But if the Hon'ble Minister is really anxious to serve the cause of education, to solve the immense and complicated problem of reformation of the secondary education in Bengal, he and his party have to depend, not upon the assured majority in the Legislature alone, but upon the good-will and collaboration of public-spirited men and women of Bengal, upon the silent educationists and leaders of public opinion here whose services will be forthcoming in any genuine attempt at solving this standing problem. How far the Ministry—who have sponsored the present Bill—and their supporters in the Legislature are alive to the seriousness of the situation in the field of education will be evident by an examination of the Bill in the light of the requirements of the country as indicated so clearly by the Sadler Commission.

It will be interesting, in this connection, to refer to what Prof. Rushbrook Williams so pertinently observed in 'India in 1920' after Dr. Sadler and his eminent colleagues had reported. “. . . But the whole structure of secondary education in India,” wrote Mr. Williams, “is very unsatisfactory. . . . This branch of educational work is of poor standard and badly regulated. The demand for it is almost inexhaustible and all efforts at reform seem at present to be swamped beneath an overwhelming supply of bad and cheap institutions. . . . On the whole, the main indictment against the structure of secondary education in India is

that it has hitherto failed to equip those who undergo it for citizenship. . . The re-organization of the secondary education is one of the first tasks which will await Indian Ministers. At present the schools have no spiritual life which touches a boy's innermost being and contain nothing which may satisfy his emotional desires. Since by far the largest proportion of population of any country, even under the most favourable circumstances, can scarcely hope to pursue its formal education beyond the completion of the full secondary stage, it is of the first importance that the structure of secondary education should be well-balanced. Unless this is the case in India, the major portion even of those boys who pass through the full secondary course must necessarily enter the world with no training for citizenship, with unformed ideas and with no aspirations save those connected with personal gratifications. The establishment of a new system is, therefore, urgently necessary and if, as is devoutly to be hoped, it follows the lines laid down by the Calcutta University Commission, it will entail a re-modelling of the existing Department of Public Instruction. The erection in several provinces of the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education representative not only of the official, educational and sectarian interests, but also of industry, agriculture, medicine and the like, will be necessary before the structure of secondary education can be so framed as to support the responsibilities which will rest upon it for training in nationhood the future citizens of India. . .” We do not think any sane man will have reason to differ from the general estimate of our working of secondary education, or of its failure to give the requisite training to future citizens, or challenge the “main indictment” brought against it so strongly by Mr. Williams ; we shall have, however, to refer to his observations again.

Let us now see what the next great authoritative body

found the state of things to be, after some years of working of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms under which Education was under an Indian Minister in the provinces ; the views expressed by that august statutory body composed as it was of some of the famous statesmen and politicians from the British Parliament are entitled to great weight and no apology is needed to quote from them at length, and the importance of the subject deserves no less. It must be admitted in passing, however, no official body, charged with the onerous duty of recording their considered judgment on the state of things in the field of education, could be more sympathetic and cautious than the Simon Commission were in their review of their Education (Auxiliary) Committee's report, from which we quote now. The Simon Commission observed, “. . . The complaint that the system of public education is top-heavy is of old standing. It is also a common complaint that the system of higher education is not adjusted to the social and economic structure of the country. In the field of secondary education, the problem of guiding the system into profitable channels of a good general education is complicated by the peculiar patronage exercised over the high schools by the Universities in respect of their recognition, resulting in an undesirable dominance over both objective and curriculum. The narrowness and uniformity of high school courses is largely attributable to University influence . . . the instruction is not effective ; the educational value obtained for public money and effort is proportionately small. The pay and conditions of service and the qualifications of teachers are often very unsatisfactory. The impression indeed is left that the education departments had had little success in their attempts to improve the curriculum and teaching in secondary schools and are far from satisfied with the existing standard. In the circumstances, indiscriminate expan-

sion is not likely to be profitable ; indeed, at this moment it is wise regulation rather than fresh expansion that is needed. It is true that in India, in accordance with a long-standing policy the provision for secondary schools has been mainly left to voluntary efforts. It is, therefore, not easy for a provincial Government to exercise an effective control over their establishment and conduct, and in fairness to Ministers, this circumstance must be taken into account. Still there can be no doubt that in the interests of India a very serious effort is required to put the system of secondary education on a satisfactory footing and this effort of re-organisation remains to be made by Ministers. On the other hand, as in the field of primary education, there are signs that the schools do and will respond to endeavours to humanize them and make them instrument of social training and real education rather than channels for mechanical conveyance of information which can be reproduced without digestion in a University hall."

In view of the importance of the subject and of the weight to be attached to their considered judgment we quote from the earlier part of Simon Commission's Review of the progress of education and think no apology is needed. "There are defects and weaknesses in the present system of public education," the eminent Commissioners stated, "and reforms are needed before the results which have been achieved or are likely to be achieved under it could be regarded as satisfactory. Whatever view may be taken of the present administration of the Indian education the hard fact remains that the inherent difficulties of the problem which the Ministers have to face, and which their predecessors had to face, are immense. . . So far as mere quantitative increase in the number under instruction is concerned, there has been indeed a phenomenal advance since the inception of the Reforms. Were statistics of quantitative

expansion a trustworthy indication of educational advances this might be held to furnish striking evidence of post-Reforms development. But the closer scrutiny to which they have been subjected by our Auxiliary Committee reveals the danger of accepting figures of increased school provisions or enrolment or expenditure as conclusive evidence of a proportional or indeed, as substantial increase of literacy. . . While the ignorance and indifference in matters of education which still, though to a diminishing degree, envelope the ordinary Indian household, constitute the main obstacle to real progress, we cannot resist the conclusion that failure, even in existing circumstances, to achieve more substantial results, is due mainly to ineffective control, direction and administration. Until these are improved, figures of quantitative expansion are wholly illusory as an index of increasing literacy, and most of the present expenditure of money, enthusiasm and effort will be futile. . .” No doubt these last remarks are directly applicable to the field of primary education, but they are also substantially true in the case of secondary education, even after years of Ministerial control and administration. As the Commissioners observe later, “we find in our Auxiliary Committee’s Review and in Supplementary Note, much evidence of same waste and ineffectiveness which characterise mass-education and of the same defects of direction, control and administration to which they are attributable. . .”



## CHAPTER III

### FURTHER DETERIORATION OF 'EDUCATIONAL SITUATION' AND THE REFORM CONTROVERSY

The danger of the policy of the ostrich—Serious situation as depicted in the 'India in 1920'—Governments' failure to grapple with the problem—Indictment by Prof. Rushbrook Williams and his apology—Educational reform and a serious course of events—Royal Message and Watchward of Hope—Government's failure to implement it—Quantitative expansion is no progress—Government's responsibility for 'the supreme peril of modern states' knocking at the door of India—Colossal waste of public funds—Central Government's responsibility for, and public indifference to, reform—The Bengal Tiger frustrates the Government's 'Reform' move—Bengal's sun suddenly sets—History repeats itself—Sir Asutosh's soul-stirring speech at the last crisis—His lead to the posterity.

The significant passages we have quoted at length from the reports of the important authorities, give, we are sure, quite an adequate idea of the magnitude of the problem of the reformation of the educational system in India, of its proper setting and vast background as well as of its immense difficulties. Fortunately, the problem had been most thoroughly dealt with by a body of eminent educationists, British and Indian, and a comprehensive scheme of reforms drawn with all the care and detail that the subject deserves, to which we intend to refer at length at a later stage. The safest course for the Ministers and the educationists and the intelligent public would have been to see that the reforms advocated in the Sadler Report are introduced, with modifications, here and there, necessitated by further development and experience. But no one, it seems, was alive sufficiently to, or cared much for, the gravity of the situation facing the country or the ways of saving it as indicated

by experts. Nor has there been any real justification for the fatal policy of the ostrich adopted by the responsible authorities, British as well as Indian, in a matter which was and is one of life and death to the whole country ; nor was there a general appreciation, far less the necessary realization in official quarters, of the immediate and serious danger which emanated from the continued shirking of responsibility and the perpetual shelving of the problem ; it was a danger which was knocking at our door and threatened to jeopardize the very chances not only of responsible government or of provincial autonomy but also of the maintenance of order and security of life and property and of the ordinary and salutary standards of public administration—the essential and basic conditions of civilized life and society.

The policy pursued for the last twenty years is all the more indefensible in view of the significant review of the situation—so far back as 1920—made by one of the trusted agents of the Government of India in their important publication the 'India in 1920' from which we quote ; . . . "the educational situation with which India is faced on the eve of responsible government is extremely serious. The only method by which the ideal of nationhood can spread among her vast population including as it does a multitude of diverse races, castes and creeds, is through a genuine system of national education which shall enlist in the work of nation-building the Generous Emotions of the Indian Youths. Just as the United States of America has been compelled to direct her energies towards Americanization of the foreign elements which flock to her so readily, so on her own larger scale must India endeavour to focus towards a primary national ideal the secondary provincial ideals of various portions of her population. As has been indicated, larger funds must at once be allocated to the work. For many years past, the demand for such allocation has figured

prominently in the Indian press, but hitherto there has been little conception of the national sacrifice which is involved in the requisite effort. . . Out of her revenue of something over £180 millions, India is already spending £15 millions upon education. But India is a poor land and the section of her small revenue available for education is inadequate to the demands made upon it. However, it is not easy to see how the figure can be substantially increased . . . there are many heavy charges upon the resources of the country, of which the most important are the defence of a long frontier and the maintenance of law and order. . . . It is charges for these ends that have hitherto crippled the efforts of administrators to set the educational structure of India upon a foundation sufficiently extensive for the requirements of the country. It is to be hoped that Indian agencies henceforth in charge will be able to solve the problem. . . The difficulty lies not merely in magnitude but also in the urgency of the problem. If funds cannot be found and the educational structure of India cannot expand in proportion to her needs, the realization of responsible government, with all that realization implies in the way of national progress, may be long delayed. . ."

No one having a tolerable acquaintance with, or actual experience in, the working of the system of public education in India will dispute that the account, given in the foregoing observations of Prof. Williams and of the Simon Commission, represents the true state of things in the field of education here. Any one surveying this vast and tragic field will do well to take note of the two broad facts that emerge from the review of the Simon Commission in this respect ; namely, (i) that neither the Education Departments nor the Provincial Governments in India, in the Reforms regime, had much success in ~~improving the state~~ of things in the secondary schools and (ii) that ". . . . In the

interests of India a very serious effort is required to put the system of secondary education on a satisfactory footing and this effort of re-organization remains to be made by Ministers". But one cannot but join issue with the august Commissioners on their complacent and sweeping assumption that "... The British connection with India has throughout been marked by progressive efforts to plan and apply an educational policy"; we would only observe in passing that the whole history of the movement of educational progress in India is a refutation of the unjustifiable and unnecessary assertion implied. The Government of India themselves in 1919 wrote to the Secretary of State, as we have already seen, of the argument that "our educational policy has not been a success in the past ; that it has at times been lacking in foresight and perspective, we do not deny. We admit the errors of the past and we ask time to repair them." The Minute of dissent of Sir Sankaran Nair from which we have quoted at length entirely demolishes the gratuitous assumption of the Simon Commission ; besides, the Report of the Calcutta University Commission, as Sir Sankaran observed, "we have to look to, for the nature of our mistakes in the past ; there can be no more scathing condemnation of the system than that to be found in the Commission's Report ;" but in spite of all these, if, as the statutory Commissioners said, "the survey of the last hundred years in this respect is one of which no Englishman who appreciates the immense difficulties to be surmounted need feel ashamed," we cannot help.

The "main indictment" of Mr. Rushbrook Williams' against the structure of secondary education' deserves much more serious attention at the hands of the Government and the public than it or similar other indictments and warnings issued from equally or more authentic sources have done ; as we have said earlier, few realize what this

dismal and nationwide failure of the structure of secondary education in India 'to equip those who undergo it for citizenship' costs India in the shape of poverty, disease and death, on the one hand, and dangerous misdirected zeal in politics and literature, and perverse patriotism and religious fanaticism and bigotry and communal passions and furies on the other. No one in touch with the sordid and tragic actualities in the political or even in the civic sphere, can dispute the truth of the statement that considerable portion at any rate, of those who have had the benefit of a full course of secondary education, "enter the world with no training for citizenship, with unformed ideas and with no aspirations save those connected with personal gratification". Had this system of secondary education in India been well-planned and, consequently, successful, had it been intended to equip, and capable of equipping, those for whom it is meant, for the hard struggle for existence and the exalted task that await the children of Mother India in this critical period of her history, more than half of the age-old unhappiness and accumulating evils that the millions suffer from, and most of the meaningless and 'ignoble strife' of the 'madding crowd' and parasitical tendencies and communal passions and frenzies that have blackened our recent history, would hardly have any scope.

We have, here, to pause a little and examine the weak-kneed and unconvincing apology of Prof. Rushbrook Williams—which was quite of a piece with those of countless apologists of British rule in India—for the dismal and protracted failure of the Government of India to put the system of public education in India on a satisfactory footing and to help in the gigantic task of carrying into effect the much-needed and long-deferred reforms on approved lines ; paucity of funds, he like many others had tried to make out, had stood in the way of Government's doing

the right thing in the right time in the field of education. However, "it is not easy to see how the figure (the amount spent on education from the public funds) can be substantially increased," he had observed, "there are many heavy charges upon the resources of the country, etc., etc. . . ." We have already seen that the Government of India in their important Despatch to the Secretary of State had stated in 1919, "During the lean years education received only such funds as were available after more imperious needs had been satisfied." And the Government wanted time to repair "the errors of the past." But certainly if paucity of funds really presented the insurmountable obstacle in the way of reparation of "the errors of the past" they would not have asked for "time to repair them". We might cite just another authority of no little pre-eminence—who at one time held the highest official position in India—Sir C. P. Ilbert ; ". . . at the beginning of the last century the British rulers were," he observed, "far too busily engaged in making and organizing their conquests and in settling their systems of revenue and judicial administration to have any leisure for such matter as education. . . ." The incontrovertible fact that stares one in the face is this: the Government of India never 'recognised national education as an obligation'; they could find in the early days of British rule fabulous sums for costly wars for territorial expansion and for imperial purposes ; they are allocating year in and year out—in recent years—more or less a half of their entire revenues for military and what they are pleased to call Defence purposes—a considerable part of this expenditure ought to be debited to the British Exchequer—in the teeth of Indian, and even European non-official, opinion ; they could find huge amounts, for big and unproductive and useless projects like the Back Bay scheme, the Bally Bridge, not to speak of New Delhi—the whole or part of which

could have been easily and safely diverted towards the fulfilment of the primary duty of a civilized Government, namely, that of building and maintaining the requisite system of education for the country.

The whole course of India's recent history in some of the essential features would have been different, and in all human probability, a dark and dismal chapter pertaining to Bengal would have been nowhere, had the Government, the custodians of public-funds, our benevolent 'trustees' taken effective steps to translate into tangible and timely deeds their pious wishes and professed solicitude for the moral, material and intellectual welfare of India ; but they failed to promote India's welfare without a thriving educational system here, as it is the first pre-requisite of this welfare ; had they but transformed and renovated the time-worn, top-heavy sterile system based on a century-old ill-conceived policy and an unnatural unpatriotic ideal,—all of which had been acting like a dead-weight, crushing the vitality of the people—and followed a nation-wide and natural policy suited to the requirements of progress and responsive to the demands of experience, and had discarded the political motive underlying it, Bengal would have in all human probability been spared the agony of the terrorist regime. After all, it was mainly economic pressure, with the prospect of a barren and ignoble life of the hewer of wood and drawer of water in their own country, aided by a false sense of values, which lashed into fury, the natural impatient idealism of tender manhood and boyhood, and carried the admittedly 'generous emotions of Indian youth' into dangerous and misguided channels ; these were the principal factors in swelling the ranks of these unfortunate youths who were ultimately the victims of a false training and of false ideals and false doctrines. With a really benevolent Government in active sympathy with the

natural aspirations of young manhood, a Government in unison with the spirit of the age, with the healthy fruitful working of a thriving system of sound and liberal education, equipping young minds not only for the inevitable struggle for existence but also for lofty social and patriotic service and discipline, with the reasonable prospect of realization of the natural aspirations and hopes of young and ardent manhood opening out before all, with the dynamic and beautiful and lofty ideals of Indian civilization and culture moulding the character of the Nation's youth, the anarchist movement and the terrorist activities would have been an impossibility ; and it was not surely beyond the resources of a broad and human statesmanship to prevent it rearing its ugly head, if only there were functioning in fruition the proper system of popular education, related intimately to the realities of life and meeting the requirements of the age and the country. But the Fates had decided otherwise and Bengal had had to pay a heavy toll for the false and fatal step of her rash and impulsive youths whose impatient idealism blinded them to the inhumanity and the ultimate failure of their action. With the unlimited resources of India at their disposal, the Government of India were all along content with their half-hearted, ill-conceived policy in the vital nation-building sphere of education—the policy which was based on political motive and pursued for what has been proved to be political purposes. In the first quarter of the century some noble attempts were made by Indians to deal with the great problem of educational reform and reconstruction, by the late Mr. Gokhale, by the late Sir Asutosh and by some other ardent spirits who wanted to build a glorious structure of education on purely national lines and in the control of national leaders in Bengal ; but the Government ranged themselves against all these efforts. And after his countrymen had banged the door of progress



deliberately for more than a century and half of their rule, Mr. Rushbrook Williams had the mockery to hope in the year of grace 1920 ". . . that the Indian agencies henceforth in charge will be able to solve the problem".

It is just three decades that His late and beloved Majesty King George V, Emperor of India, was graciously pleased to receive an address from the University of Calcutta ; we recall the moving words of deep sympathy and ardent hope for the blessing of education sweetening the homes of India's teeming millions that His Majesty uttered on the historic occasion ". . . Six years ago", said the benevolent King, "I sent from England to India a message of sympathy. To-day in India I give to India the watch-word of Hope. On every side I trace the signs and stirrings of new life. Education has given you hope and through better and higher education you will build up better and higher hopes. It is my wish that there may be spread over the land a net-work of schools and colleges. . . And it is my wish, too, that the homes of my Indian subjects may be brightened and their labour sweetened by the spread of knowledge. . . It is through education that my wish will be fulfilled and the cause of education in India will ever be close to my heart". Right, royal and lofty words these, worthy of the unique occasion, worthy of the noble-hearted royal personage who addressed them and worthy, too, of the ancient land to which they were addressed—the land which had been, in the morning of history, in the dim and distant past, the cradle of civilization and the home of the highest philosophy, religion and knowledge, and continued through the ages that followed, to be the inexhaustible repository of Culture sending forth successive waves of renaissance during the succeeding epochs.

One has here to pause and enquire what steps, what adequate measures were taken and earnest efforts, made by

His Majesty's loyal and able servants in India to translate into action His Majesty's noble words and ardent hopes, by spreading 'over the land a network of schools and colleges'. But nothing could move the Government to change their time-honoured policy in the field of education or inspire their Christian souls, deadened as much with routine as with the enervating influences of India, with a proper sense of their duty and responsibility in this vital matter or shake off their traditional attitude which was 'too wooden, too iron, too antidiluvian.' One cannot help regretting in passing, what a different picture this ancient land would have presented, flowing as it has been doing with milk and honey, aglow with the light of its hoary civilization and dynamic and deathless culture from time immemorial, even in the ages when the world was steeped in the darkness of ignorance and was ruled by the Law of the jungle, if our heaven-born rulers could forget their past 'errors' and honestly undertake to help in the great work of "spreading Knowledge" and of diffusing education on sound basis, as they did in their own country ; with an army of teachers and workers, efficient and trained, fired with the idealism and zeal innate in their oriental nature, and working through the 'network of school and colleges', the poverty-stricken, disease-ridden country-side of ours, merged in ignorance and illiteracy as it has steadily become in the wake of British rule, would have been transformed into thriving centres of life and activity, of healthy and happy manhood and womanhood.

In more recent years, no doubt, there has been phenomenal quantitative expansion in the field of secondary, and even of collegiate education, specially in Bengal ; but apart from the danger of assessing this phenomenal increase at its face-value, as was emphasised rightly by the Simon Commission, we must not forget that the system of secondary

education has to play a very important part in the actual regeneration of India, nine-tenths of which—about one-sixth of the entire humanity—live in the small and scattered villages ; and unless these teeming millions could be galvanised into a better and worthier life and unless a new spirit and a new hope and faith could be infused into their traditional life of 'placid, pathetic contentment', the heart and soul of India, the real India would remain unmoved and unaffected by the tremendous changes in the world and will not join in, and benefit by, the inevitable re-ordering of society and re-shaping of civilization on more equitable and humane basis. As the Simon Commission observed, ". . . It is not so much to say that the establishment of a really satisfactory mass education in India, and the creation, thereby, of an educated peasantry, constitute one of the most tremendous problems which educationists have ever had to face. . ." but the gigantic task of a satisfactory mass education, indispensable to the rise of India into her fullest stature, cannot be undertaken without an army of efficient and energetic workers which a proper and adequate system of secondary education can alone equip and furnish. India would have been a powerful and efficient ally and friend to England, and Bengal—which had been, notwithstanding her wide-ranging poverty and disease, and economic deterioration and physical weakness, the leader and pioneer in the intellectual, social and political renaissance of India,—would have been a different place to live in, had she been blessed with a country-wide effective and well-planned system of secondary education to enlighten and invigorate her intelligentsia, which is the backbone of the whole nation. But this glorious consummation could not be accomplished without the fullest resources of the State being pulled in the work and unless a bold and constructive statesmanship combined and collaborated with public opinion to bring

forth and maintain the agency essential for the purpose, namely, the proper system of secondary education.

There is one aspect of this big question which generally escapes public attention ; but it is of great importance. Even after Education had been transferred to Ministerial control, there is nothing in the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 which categorically prevents the Central Government, with the unlimited resources of this vast country at their disposal, from releasing a part of their large revenue for the gigantic work of educational reformation, for putting the worn-out system of education on a satisfactory footing, a task which they had long neglected ; but they did nothing of the kind ; instead they acquiesced in such financial arrangements and adjustments that the provinces—specially Bengal—were left without their natural and legitimate income and were hardly in a position to launch on any nation-wide nation-building scheme of education or of sanitation, which was urgently required to save the provincial life in the villages from decay and death that have been threatening it so long. But the strangest irony of Fate for unhappy India is the fact that her highly civilized and cultured rulers, with their democratic instinct, were alive to the gravity of the situation that had arisen in the provinces, and to the seriousness of the problem that awaited the Ministers of Education there ; some of them went even to the length of probing the future for our benefit, with something like a prophetic vision, as Sir Asutosh, we have seen, did ; “. . . it will be realized”, wrote Professor Rushbrook Williams, “the uplift of the Indian people, economic, physical and moral, really resolves itself into question of education. Without education, the labourers, whether rural or urban, will continue, as at present, poor and helpless with little incentive to self-help. Without education, hygienic progress among the masses is impossible.

and social reform a vain delusion. India's educational problems, framed as they are on a Gargantuan scale, must find their solution writ proportionately large. Expenditure to a figure hitherto undreamed must be faced courageously and speedily. For without education, India will be confronted in no long time with that supreme peril of modern states, an uninformed democracy, omnipotent but irresponsible. . . ." It is probably pardonable for a student of contemporary politics to ask, as posterity will no doubt ask, with this vivid realization of the impending peril knocking at the door and of the extreme urgency and magnitude of the work to be undertaken in order that the yawning peril of modern democracies might not engulf the infant democracy of India, why this supreme work was left over by the authorities in England and India ; specially as they never tired of proclaiming to the world with the flourish of trumpet that as on themselves 'the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian people' they 'must be the judges of time and measure of each advance' in the never-ending road to India's self-Government ; what timely and adequate measures, one might ask in vain, the British authorities, our self-appointed guardians, took to ward off this 'supreme peril of modern states'? Echo answers, what! They stand self-condemned ; condemned out of their own mouth, as we have seen.

In these circumstances, in the face of this compelling paucity of funds—if we are to take them at their words—what right the Governments in India had for sinking more than a hundred crores, of poor India's money, in a waste and desert land far from the centres of public opinion and business in a vain-glorious attempt to imitate the Grand Moguls—specially when India's teeming millions were half-fed and half-clothed and steeped in illiteracy and disease, for want, as they said, of adequate funds for taking neces-

sary measures to remove these very evils which followed rapidly in the wake of British rule? But it is the standing tragedy of the British connection that India's immense resources are wasted and squandered in any way her benevolent rulers would choose to do, but adequate funds would not be available for undertaking any nation-wide scheme of reforms in the field of education or sanitation, which they themselves deemed to be indispensable to her safety and well-being. But unfortunately for India, if her European rulers, autocratic and arrogant as they were, shirked the sacred obligations and primary responsibility of the 'trustee' in such vital spheres of life as education and sanitation, her own sons, 'clothed in brief little authority'—to whose not over-steady hands and not too broad vision was transferred the control in those important matters—failed to rise to the occasion—with a few notable exceptions—as was noticed by Simon Commission. Relieved of their former statutory responsibility in matters educational, the Central Government looked on; neither the provincial Ministers, nor the Legislatures nor even the intelligentsia, took cognizance of the imminent approach of that 'supreme peril of modern states', that sleeping monster of 'uninformed democracy'.

One broad and indisputable fact emerges from a review of the past; it is this: any great and nation-wide scheme of reforms in the vast field of education or sanitation could be more suitably undertaken by, or under the auspices of, the Central Government than the provincial on the latter's own initiative and resources; for one thing, the resources of the provinces are far too inadequate to have a fair chance of carrying out those immense reforms; moreover, these gigantic problems, as in the sphere of education, in the different parts of India, have good deal of common features and so could be more economically dealt with by an agency and authority in collaboration and co-operation with the

Central and provincial Governments, than by the latter alone and separately. Even though Agriculture had been a transferred subject in the provinces there was no statutory or administrative bar to the appointment and work of a Royal Commission on Agriculture or a Research Council to function for the whole of India ; and rightly so ; as the Simon Commission truly remarks "... But the fact remains and must remain, that in a country so extensive as India, the effects of any single measure are apt to be so dispersed that they can be discerned with difficulty." Nor can the present Central Government, autocratic and paternal as it is, or its successor inheriting as it will do, the former's tradition and resources, deem itself morally absolved from all responsibility in the vital and urgent matters of nationwide reforms in the unlimited field of Indian education. But before the 'uninformed democracy, omnipotent and irresponsible', rose into power in Bengal, before the control and direction in provincial affairs were transferred to its redoubtable representatives in the legislature the Government of India—who had themselves appointed the Calcutta University Commission in 1917 and had the latter's report before them in 1919—could have acted upon, and carried out, the main recommendations of that expert body and would have thus gone a long way in putting the system of education on a satisfactory footing here ; instead—as we pointed out in our work on Sir Asutosh—they deliberately stood aside as he struggled to establish in Calcutta the Teaching and Research University (including the University College of Science and Technology) which was the crowning achievement in the brilliant career of India's greatest architect in the field of educational reform. Nor were the articulate, thinking sections of our people alive to the urgency of the far-reaching and comprehensive reforms elaborately chalked out in the monumental Report of the Commission ;

no doubt the whole country, from one end of India to the other, plunged into an intense political agitation and Bengal, with her characteristic emotional fervour, was carried off her feet on the sweeping wave of political idealism ; the people had not the patience or the inclination to study the prosaic details of educational reform.

In the meantime, the situation was steadily deteriorating ; the Government of Bengal drafted a Reform Bill which gave rise to the bitterest controversy, into the retails of which we need not enter here (we dealt with the subject at length in our work on Sir Asutosh). But the Bengal Tiger was thoroughly roused ; and he rose to his fullest stature and crushed the reactionary Government move with the sheer force of his personality and the firmness of his stand, supported as he was by the inherent justice of his cause and the solid public opinion of his country. One can not but pause and wonder what Himalayan caprice of Fate it was to snatch off from his field of activity Bengal's miraculous man of action in the sphere of education when he was not only in the fullest blaze of glory but when his services and his sage counsel and ripe experience were absolutely needed to complete his life-work and carry out, in the light of further developments, the reform that he, along with other members of the Commission, had advocated so earnestly. In the gathering gloom and the inevitable danger that were threatening the nation in the sphere of education, his was the one colossal figure that could have stemmed the onrushing tide of reaction or checked the steady course of dangerous deterioration.

But at this critical juncture Bengal's heroic sun—in the academic sphere—went down suddenly in a blaze of glory ; his "Spirit's bark was driven

Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng,  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given".



But his immortal creative spirit had left its final note of warning to the posterity, as he had probed the future with his prophetic vision, and indicated the danger signals in the horizon. It cannot but be a sad commentary on the contemporary history of our country that he was opposed by a motley combination of European and Indian 'reformers' both from the ranks of bureaucracy and the public life, who thought it their duty to apply what was tersely termed by another eminent son of Bengal as the 'surplusage of their virgin mind' to strengthen the Government onslaught, even though he had the privilege of getting unstinted support and eulogy at the hands of no less a personage than the Earl of Ronaldshay, the late Secretary of State for India as he then was. That danger, as we have just said, was warded off by the Herculean efforts and heroic stand made by this giant among men.

But history has a knack of repeating itself ; scarcely had two decades passed than another curious and motley combination, headed by an eminent countryman of ours, though an ardent follower of Islam, has cropped up to set back the clock of progress and usurp for his party the position of vantage, in the field of education, which the Hindus have won after nearly a century of patient toil and sacrifice. Once more, the danger that was averted by Sir Asutosh is upon us, knocking at the very portals of our temple of learning, and unless warded off, will surely demolish the entire sacred structure in the name of reform. We recall the striking and soul-stirring speech that Bengal's Hercules in the field of education delivered, when face to face with that menacing and powerful combination . . . "We cannot shut our eyes", said Sir Asutosh, in the course of his last Convocation Address in Calcutta, "to the lamentable fact that there have been abundant indications in recent times of the existence of what looked like a determined

conspiracy to bring this University into disesteem and discredit. A satirist, gifted with an uncommon sense of humour, recently classified the members of this conspiracy as political adventurers, academic impostures, and sanctimonious hypocrites. I cannot vouch for the logical accuracy of this classification, much less for its completeness ; this, at any rate, is plain that critics of this type, if they exist, neither ascertain the facts for themselves nor act upon them when they have been investigated by others. . . . Let me turn to the burning topic of the hour, the problem of reconstruction of this University. What has stirred us is the confidence and the readiness displayed by the physicians who have offered us the benefit of their restoratives. We cannot overlook, however, that the magnitude and the complexity of the task so impressed the Government of India that more than five years ago, they were led to appoint a Commission to enquire into the conditions and prospects of this University and frame a constructive policy in relation thereto. The plan outlined by the Commission had already been adopted in the reconstruction of other Indian Universities. Bold indeed must be the reformers who set aside the recommendations of the Commission in respect of the very University with reference to whose special needs they reported. . . . It would be lamentable if a plan of this character, carefully worked out by a special body of experts were to be discarded in favour of an unknown type of constitution ; such a course is full of grave dangers and may aggravate what the Commissioners described as the greatest defects of the existing system which was forced on the country by the Indian Universities Act of 1904, notwithstanding the emphatic and unanimous protest of the educated public. We have never made secret of our deep-rooted conviction that the interests of the nation imperiously demand an autonomous University, disentangled from the

messes of a political organization of a new type which had not yet had time to establish a regular tradition. . . Surely it cannot be for the welfare of an educational institution of the highest grade, that it should be liable to be blown about by every wind of fashionable dogma in political circles, or its principles and policies should be dependant upon every rise and fall of the political barometer. We stand unreservedly by the doctrine that if education be our policy as a nation, it must not be our politics. Freedom is its very life-blood, the condition of its growth, the secret of its success. . . ”

This epoch-making speech and the manly stand made by Sir Asutosh will, no doubt, go down to posterity as Bengal's heroic answer to the unholy challenge of the forces of reaction knocking at the doors of her academic shrine ; but in view of the imminent peril threatening the structure of educational system to-day, we think we need offer no apology in referring to another striking address of this prince of patriots ; it has indeed a singular bearing upon the present controversial and reactionary legislative and administrative measures of the 'democratic' Government, intended to strike at the foundation and structure of the country's educational system and civic administration and tighten the Government's hold over them. Referring to the baneful tendency of the new-born and 'uninformed' democracy in our country to interfere in, and extend its control over, the sacred field of education, Sir Asutosh said, at Lucknow, "I yield to none in my fervent admiration of democracy and democratic institutions ; at the same time, I realize the weakness and dangers of democracy. When a democracy imperiously demands control over the University, I answer without hesitation, 'pause, my friends, your claim will become admissible only when democracy ceases to be a democracy and is transformed into an intellectual aristocracy.' No

University man will seriously suggest that we should hand over the control of the University to a democracy which has not come under the influence, much less realized, the value of the highest ideals of education in the life of the nations''.

It will be less than human not to be moved by this unassailable logic or the force of this indictment of the undue and unwarranted 'democratic' interference in, and control over, the working of the system of education ; but it is impossible to lay too much emphasis on the broad and basic principles of academic administration and work, which were enunciated so clearly by this academic genius and which will serve as a beacon-light to the generations yet unborn ; for they embody truth, universal and abiding, for all earnest and practical men to follow as they have been followed, in the planning and working of all rational systems of education, ancient and modern. In the predicament in which India—and Bengal and Sind in particular—finds herself with the rise of the 'uninformed' democracy, 'omnipotent but irresistible', and with the undue prominence in public affairs, of an egoistic, ignorant and dangerous communalism, the question of public education, of all grades, assumes a supreme importance overshadowing all other questions ; because the way of salvation, the way not only of escape from the horrors and tyrannies of the reactionary and communal multitudes imposing their will upon their representatives in the legislature and the administration, but also the whole way of 'uplift of the Indian people, economic, physical and moral', lies through education, more and better education, and 'resolves itself into question of education' ; hence education must 'be our policy as a nation' but not our politics, the sordid, selfish ignoble game of self-aggrandisement, collective and individual, which is fast converting mankind, at any rate, its

powerful, political and pre-dominant classes, into vain, self-seeking, short-sighted, automata—'mere automata' who 'have no self-control and are merely shuddering through a series of reflexes,' as the human 'dolls' in the last part of the 'Back to Methuselah' did. Let not education, let not freedom in educational sphere which is 'its very life-blood, the condition of its growth and the secret of its success', be the plaything of the ignorant, self-willed and arrogant multitudes and their egoistic and adventurous leaders and spokesmen, intoxicated with the lust of power and privilege, the alluring gifts of the ballot box.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEMOCRATIC ENCROACHMENT UPON ACADEMIC AND CIVIC SPHERES

Fundamental question in 'democratic' encroachment—India's glorious academic tradition—The reaction against 'democratic' excess and wilfulness—Prof. Jethro Brown's indictment against 'a Parliamentary majority'—Mill's criticism of 'a numerous assembly'—Democracy in actual working—Bernard Shaw's views—'Infirmities and dangers of representative Government'—Plato's warning—Analogy of Athens and India—Dangerous tendencies of 'democracy' in India—Mill's views on 'division of labour between central and local authorities'—Ascendancy of Democracy under false colour—self-Government in Bengal—Emerson's warning to the oppressor and sustaining message to the oppressed.

Before we conclude this survey of the vast background of the problem of educational reform in Bengal in particular—and in India in general—we have to pause once more to refer to a fundamental constitutional question which is of far-reaching significance to the progress of political institutions on democratic lines as well as to the ultimate well-being and elevation of society and humanity which this progress is meant to achieve and advance and without which this progress is worse than useless—it is a progress in a vicious circle. The question has assumed its present importance in view of the inevitable tendencies and attempts of the new-born democracy in India, which, as we have seen, has not had the necessary training and discipline and the sobering influences which spring naturally from the responsibilities and obligations of a really free and independent national life, and are the gifts of a nation-wide system of proper public education ; unfortunately for our country, there have been persistent attempts and marked

tendencies of this irresponsible, ignorant, 'uninformed democracy' to encroach upon the rights and privileges of popular institutions, of civic and academic bodies and to extend its powers of control and direction in the working of the system of public education ; in Bengal, as in Sind and the Punjab, communalism of a mean type, communal passions and prejudices have been the ruling factor in this sordid and tragic drama.

But the whole history of ancient India, during thousands of years of her unique civilization and culture when India attained the supreme heights of her glory as yet unattained by any other nation and people on earth, bears eloquent testimony to the independent and vigorous and fruitful life and working of the popular institutions, specially of the forest Universities and preceptors' 'domestic schools' in the Vedic and epic periods, and of the glorious Monasteries and famous Universities at Nalanda, Takshashila, Sarnath and various other places ; it was not only that freedom was the essence of their life and activities, but "the condition of their growth and the secret of their success". In the sacred seclusion of their forest or hermitage, or of their cloisters in the Buddhist period, the teachers would instruct and educate the nation's boyhood and youth, equipping them for the battle of life as well as imparting to them the highest Knowledge and culture ; and not even in their wildest dreams and strangest flights of imagination, would any ruling sovereign or governing authority, not even the most powerful king or emperor think of interfering in their activities or in the normal working of the country's educational system ; indeed, nowhere in the world have the respect and devotion for one's preceptor reached such sublime excellence as in the India of yore when the mightiest of Monarchs, as we read even in so late a poet as Kalidas, deemed it a great good fortune to take the dust off the sacred feet of his sage

preceptor and do everything in his power to serve him and his cause. This tradition of soulful reverence and selfless love for our ancient preceptors and teachers as a class, and as an indispensable and a highly respected institution in the economy of Indian life and society, is unique in the world and is ingrained in our marrow. This institution of pupils and preceptors living as they did absolutely free from State or outside interference in closest cultural and spiritual relationship and affinity in the forest universities or the latter's home, ashram, or, as in the later age, in the Monasteries and Universities of the Buddhist period, has been a main-spring of India's cultural life and renaissance, and a deep-rooted repository of the deathless vitality of India's hoary civilization.

Coming to modern age and modern precedent, we have yet to find the British Parliament, as pertinently pointed by Sir Asutosh in the course of his memorable Lucknow speech in 1924, busying itself, or interfering, 'in the details of University administrations in Leeds, Manchester, or Sheffield'. Long before the rise of the new-born democracy in India—no doubt in a diluted and complex form and on communal basis which cut at the root of the fundamental democratic principle but did not perturb our self-appointed guardians and trustees—long before this 'irresponsible' and 'uninformed' democracy began to grab power with a vengeance and encroach upon the rights and privileges of public bodies, a definite reaction has set in political thought in the West ; a rapidly growing class of thinkers has arisen which stoutly challenges the common form of democratic rule and the ways of parliamentary government and legislation ; we do not mean the more recent meteoric rise and catastrophic activities of Communism, or of Fascism and Nazism, which, it seems, thrives on the destruction of personal liberty and privileges of modern democratic citizenship—



but the eminent thinkers and writers who find that democracy has failed to deliver the goods ; indeed there have arisen definite tendencies even in the most advanced democracies to impair the progress and vigour of the national life by using the machinery of the state to interfere in, and encroach upon, the regional and local centres of this life or to further class, sectarian and even individual, interests at the cost of the national and international ; very often the usual majority which finds itself elected to the Parliament is incompetent to rule and unfit to legislate ; nor do these writers have anything to do with, none have taken part in, what has been so ably described by Professor Jethro Brown (and dealt with in his well-known work on the underlying principles of Modern Legislation) as The Challenge of Anarchy.

. . . "A Parliamentary majority", writes the eminent Professor, "is often a mere conglomeration of groups whose will finds expression in legislation for reasons of party tactics. According to an eminent and impartial observer, "The bidding for support of whole classes of voters by legislation for their benefits presents probably the most serious menace to which British institutions are exposed". In the second place, legislation may be class legislation, even though it be approved by a majority of the people. While the sovereign claims of common welfare are to-day admitted in form, the modern multitude like the aristocracy it has replaced, is apt to assume that its own interest is necessarily *identical* with the common welfare. It threatens at times to pass under domination of those who, in place of the old notion that the welfare of the majority should be subordinated to the interests of the minority, would substitute the doctrine that the interests of the majority need not be taken into account. . . The very facts that our political institutions confer supreme power on the

majority of the citizens makes class legislation more plausible, if not more easy. Few impartial thinkers of our time will endorse Nietzsche's attack on democratic institutions but the dangers to which he refers are far from imaginary. Democratic institutions offer an ideal means whereby mere numbers may establish, through the medium of ballot box, a political and economic system which will level down the few rather than upraise the many, and will so develop a race of invertibrates rather than a race of super men. I do not attack majority rule. . . But I also believe in so framing political institutions as to impose a check upon the despotism of momentary majority. . . ."

Let us now refer to another and greater, though much older, authority who has commanded the respect of all students of politics and sociology for nearly a century, we mean John Stuart Mill. How far the following passages from his "Representative Government" have a special and significant bearing on the present deplorable tendencies and the existing state of things in India will be apparent to the dullest understanding. "But it is equally true", wrote Mill so far back as the fifties of the last century, "though only of late and slowly beginning to be acknowledged, that a numerous assembly is as little fitted for the direct business of legislation as for that of administration. There is hardly any kind of intellectual work which so much needs to be done, not only by experienced and exercised minds, but by minds trained to the task through long and laborious study, as the business of making laws. This is a sufficient reason, were there no other, why they can never be well made but by a committee of very few persons. A reason no less conclusive is that every provision of law requires to be framed with the most accurate and long-sighted perception of its effects on all other provisions ; and the law when made should be capable of fitting into a consistent whole with the

previously existing law. It is impossible that these conditions should be in any degree fulfilled when laws are voted clause by clause in a miscellaneous assembly. The incongruity of such a mode of legislating would strike all minds, were it not that our laws are already, as to form and construction, such a chaos, that the confusion and contradiction seem incapable of being made greater by any addition to the mass. Yet even now, the utter unfitness of our legislative machinery for its purpose is making itself practically felt every year more and more''. It is not our present purpose to be drawn into a general discussion of the big question and the higher controversy as to whether Democracy has so failed humanity as to require to be scrapped ; but surely there is no escape from the irresistible conclusion that democracy—as it is being worked and as it has been working in its present form—has proved itself to be a misnomer even in the best democratic countries in the world.

But like Prof. Jethro Brown and Mill and a host of other political thinkers and writers, no one will condemn the true spirit of democracy or challenge the abstract moral right of democracy ; but regard being had to the level of intelligence and equilibrium of the masses of a country and to the present complicated stage of social and racial development and the multifarious needs and imperative demands of modern civilization, we are not surprised that the masses and the multitudes have been found unable to grasp the intricacies of the important public questions, political as well as social, which vitally affect them and the body politic ; and their representatives in the legislature or in the party—which has come to be the essential element of modern democracies—have not the inclination or ability or both to deal with effectively, and in right spirit, either the momentous questions and the issues or the prosaic details

of ordinary day-to-day affairs which come up before the legislature for disposal and decision ; in the moment of a national crisis, all the elements of the democratic state, the masses, their chosen representatives in the Parliament as well as the Government formed on the basis of party politics—so, necessarily unwieldy and weak and not fully representatives of the best intellect and wisdom of the nation—fail to rise to the occasion and an immediate return is made to an oligarchy or aristocracy in the garb of democracy ; and in normal times, it is the party leader and persons of influence in the party who practically run the show—except when they are swayed by the fluctuating tendencies of the party men, and tossed hither and thither by party feeling ; the tragedy is that both the party leaders and party men are apt to consider themselves as the State itself and deem their interests to be identical with, or to overshadow in importance, those of the country and the nation. Referring to the breakdown in the European democracies of the will to act on, and of the intelligence to appreciate, the dangers of the post-war European situation—which has culminated in the present Titanic War—Bernard Shaw wrote, . . . “At the present moment one half of Europe, having knocked the other half down, is trying to kick it to death, and may succeed. . . . And the good-natured majority are looking on in helpless horror, or allowing themselves to be persuaded by the newspapers of their exploiters that the kicking is not only sound commercial investment, but an act of divine justice of which they are the ardent instrument. . . . Good intentions do not carry with them a grain of political science. . . . It has taken them (the most able and disinterested students of this science in England . . .) forty years to formulate a political constitution adequate to existing needs. If this is the measure of what can be done in a life time of extraordinary ability. . . .

what are we to expect from the parliament man to whom political science is as remote and as distasteful as the differential calculus, and to whom such an elementary but a vital point as the law of economic rent is a *pons asinorum* never to be approached, much less crossed? or from the common voter who is mostly so hard at work all day earning a living that he cannot keep awake for five minutes over a book? . . . ”

Modern man not having shed his egoistic temperament and selfish outlook, not being able to rise to the possibilities of his higher nature, this is the inevitable danger to which democracy—and the party system of Government, its invariable concomitant—has exposed humanity. As Mill forcibly says, in discussing the ‘infirmities and dangers to which representative Government is liable’. . . . “One of the greatest dangers, therefore, of democracy, as of all other forms of Governments lies in the sinister interest of the holders of power: it is the danger of class legislation ; of government intended for (whether really effecting it or not) the immediate benefit of the dominant class, to the lasting detriment of the whole. And one of the most important questions demanding consideration, in determining the best constitution of representative government is how to provide efficacious securities against this evil. . . . The representative system . . . ought not to allow any of the various sectional interests to be so powerful as to be capable of prevailing against truth and justice and other sectional interests combined”. It is for this reason, ‘to provide efficacious securities against this evil,’ and guard against ‘the infirmities and dangers’ of popular government, originating from the invariable backwardness of mass-mind as well as from the inevitable tendencies of a ‘numerous’ and ‘miscellaneous’ assembly and ‘the holders of power’, that Plato, one of the greatest philosophers and political thinkers that the world

has ever seen, strongly urged in his 'Republic' that ruling and governing authority, 'political power' in the ideal state, must be confined to the class he carefully described and defined as 'philosophers'. . . . "Unless it happens", wrote Plato in 'The Republic', "either that philosophers acquire the kingly power in States, or that those who are now called kings and potentates be imbued with a sufficient measure of genuine philosophy, that is to say, unless political power and philosophy be united in the same person, most of those minds which at present pursue one to the exclusion of the other being peremptorily debarred from either, there will be no deliverance, my dear Glaucan, for cities, nor yet, I believe, for human race ; neither can the commonwealth, which we have now sketched in theory ever till then grow into a possibility and see the light of day. But a consciousness how entirely this would contradict the common opinion made me all along so reluctant to give expression to it ; for it is difficult to see that there is no other way by which happiness can be attained, by the state and the individual. . . ." We would only remark, in passing, that even in the days of complete ascendancy of the Athenian democracy, the popular assembly, the "Ecclesia could pass mostly decrees on single matters of policy, but laws, so called, could only be made or altered by a different and less numerous body renewed annually, called the Nomothetae, whose duty it was to revise the whole of the laws and keep them consistent with one another. . . ." In India, too, during the thousands of years of her independent glory and many-sided ascendancy, both the law-givers as well as the Councillors and Ministers of the State—who held in their hands the reins of the government of the land—came from the most cultured class whose moral and intellectual, not to speak of spiritual, eminence have not been excelled as yet in the world.

But 'democracy' has come to stay and its days are far from being numbered in our midst ; thanks to the century-old reactionary and retrograde policy pursued by our benevolent 'trustees' we can hardly hope to escape from pernicious tendencies to interfere in, and encroach upon, our civic and educational spheres, which our 'uninformed and irresponsible' democracy have already begun to manifest in the very commencement of its career, in its insatiable lust for power and control ; it would not, if left to itself, rest content unless it seizes the entire fabric of our life and throttles the time-honoured autonomy of our local bodies and other popular institutions and takes over control and direction in the sphere of public education either directly or through its own nominees. But so early a political thinker as Mill deprecates the tendency of a central authority to interfere in the 'local affairs' and condemns the former's taking any considerable part in the latter ; coming nearer home, so late a Statute—and a Statute prescribing the constitution of a mere Dependency—as the Government of India Act of 1919 which allowed it only a diluted and limited form of autonomy in the provinces laid down that in the sphere of Local Self-Government, 'Complete popular control in local bodies was to be established as far as possible'; and in the sphere of education, elected Ministers were to have control and direction. Could a greater irony be conceived than this that the Ministry under a much more liberalised and democratised constitution which has conceded full autonomy in the provinces, should busy themselves, and cut at the root of autonomy prevailing, in the sphere of education and local affairs, nearly a century after Mill's condemnation?

"It is but a simple portion, of the public business of a country", Mills says, "which can be well done or safely attempted, by the central authorities, and even in our own Government the least centralized in Europe, the legislative

portion at least of the governing body busies itself far too much with local affairs, employing the supreme power of the state in cutting down small knots which there ought to be other and better means of untying . . . there still remains so great and various an aggregate of duties that, if only on the principle of division of labour, it is indispensable to share them between central and local authorities. Not only are separate executive officers required for purely local duties (an amount of separation which exists under all Governments) but popular control over those officers can only be advantageously exerted through a separate organ. . . In an earlier part of this enquiry I have dwelt in strong language—hardly any language is strong to express the strength of my conviction—on the importance of that portion of the operation of free institutions which may be called the public education of the citizens. Now of this operation, the local administrative institutions are the chief instrument.”

Democracy had gained its unrivalled ascendancy in the minds of millions of people belonging to the different nations on earth, under what might be said to be false colours and false pretext, and India has been no exception to this general rule. But the true spirit, the pure essence of democracy, which pre-supposes its own elevation and has for its object elevation of humanity as a whole, has yet to reign in the affairs of men ; democracy in its present form and character which is something like an alluring delusion, an engrossing mirage in the most famous democratic countries in the West, cannot be a living reality in India—specially when it has made its appearance in our country on the wings of inflamed and ignorant communal passions and prejudices, as a reluctant and deferred concession, in a diluted and distorted form of what has grown up there. The beautiful ‘definition’ of democratic govern-



ment as 'Self-Government', 'the government and power of the people over themselves' swayed—and still sway—the minds of millions in Europe and America. But as Mill says, "It was now perceived that such phrases as 'Self-Government and the power of the people over themselves' do not express the true state of the case. The 'people' who exercise the power are not always the same people with those over whom it is exercised, and the self-government spoken of is not the government of each by himself, but of each by all the rest . . . the people, consequently, may desire to oppress a part of their number ; and precautions are as much needed against this, as against any other abuse of power . . . and in political speculations 'the tyranny of the majority' is now generally included among the evils against which society requires to be on its guard . . ."

This is exactly what is happening in Bengal under the garb of 'Self-Government' in the various administrative and legislative measures which have been making enormous inroads upon the popular liberties and the autonomy of the popular bodies and institutions ; and 'the power of the people over themselves' has been unmasked to be undiluted tyranny of a problematical majority ; this power of the newly born communal democracy has been harnessed to set at naught the sacred principles and basic canons of civilized government, democratic or otherwise, respected all the world over. We know, in the enervating influences of office, in the maddening intoxication of power which has come to the leaders of this irresponsible democracy as the immediate result of their victory at the polls, they will not listen to the warning voice of History or see the writings on the wall ; the large and more momentous issues that confront the nation and the humanity will pass them by—and nothing, probably, will stay their hands or give them a sense of gravity of their own hopeless position as a com-

munity or as the delightful foot-stool of British imperialism in the world.

But let us conclude this portion of our study by sounding a serious note of warning which Emerson, the Prince of philosophers and thinkers of modern age, sounded long before: "But politics rest on necessary foundations, and cannot be treated with levity. Republics abound in young civilians, who believe that the laws make the city, that grave modifications of the policy and modes of living, and employment of population, that commerce, education and religion may be voted in or out ; and that any measure, though it were abused, may be imposed on a people, if only you can get sufficient voices to make it a law. But the wise know that foolish legislation is a rope of sand, which perishes in the twisting ; that the state must follow, and not lead the character and progress of the citizen ; the strongest usurper is quickly got rid of ; and they who build on Ideas build on eternity ; and that the form of government which prevails is the expression of what cultivation exists in the population which permits it. The law is only a memorandum. We are superstitious, and esteem the statute somewhat ; so much life as it has in the character of living men is its force. The statute stands there to say, yesterday we agreed so and so, but how feel ye this article to-day? Our statute is a currency, which we stamp with our own portrait ; it soon becomes unrecognisable, and in process of time will return to the mint . . . ." These striking words, conveying as they do the basic and fundamental truth that holds good in political sphere for all time, must serve as a significant warning both to the Government and the people of Bengal. If the Government, entrenched as they are with a solid but artificial majority behind them in the legislature, place on the Statute Book the obnoxious laws which trample upon the cherished rights and wishes and traditions of

large and important sections of people, specially in spheres wherein the dictates of statesmanship, morality and expediency forbid them to thrust themselves and extend their political power, they must not delude themselves that 'commerce, education and religion may be voted in and out' and that legislation and statute which fail to get the reasoned support and willing allegiance of the people,—even of the important elements of the population—is any thing but 'a rope of sand' ; and it must 'perish in the twisting'. On the other hand, the people who are, for the time, the victim of the overzealous policy and measures of a tyrannical and arrogant Government must not fall a prey to despondency ; they must not forget that 'the state must follow, and not lead, the character and progress of the citizen'. The people must, therefore, concentrate their thoughts and energies on building the character of the individual citizen, and help forward his lasting progress, through education ; thus only will be generated an irresistible force which the State is bound to recognise and shall ultimately bow to.



## **PART II**

### **PROGRESS OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN BENGAL**



## CHAPTER V

### THE WORK OF THE DIFFERENT COMMISSIONS AND THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

The Sadler Commission's spirit of approach to, and grip on, the Problems in the field of education—Complexities and reactions of the problems—Defective terms of reference to the Commissions prevent full investigation—The Commissions' failure to 'deal with the problem as a whole'—The Sadler Commission finger the plague spots—The anarchist movement and intellectual proletariat—The old fetters continue to vitiate the working of the system—Need of constant adjustments.

Before we come to the heart of the problems that face us in the field of education in Bengal, it is necessary, as it is refreshing, to refer to the spirit with which the Sadler Commission were actuated in their monumental labours, and to see how the Commissioners, most of whom were very well-known figures in the academic world, were impressed with the urgency and magnitude of the problems they were called upon to investigate ; in the words of the Resolution of the Government of India, they were "to inquire into condition and prospects of the University of Calcutta and to consider the question of a constructive policy in relation to the questions which it presents." With a remarkable spirit of understanding and sympathy, joined with their vast knowledge and experience of academic conditions, they formulated their 'Constructive Policy' and made their recommendations after a most thorough and elaborate survey of the whole position ; but as Fate would have it, both the constructive policy and the recommendations framed by the Commission have been relegated all these years to the cold shade of neglect by the successive Governments as well as by the public opinion ;

but to-day, our Council of Ministers, in their supreme arrogance and ignorance, have thought it fit to go back, and trample, upon these very recommendations and the constructive policy in the name of reform, nor had they cared to study the problems afresh or to cause a fresh investigation to be made by another competent body. "The problem before us," said the Commissioners in their Report, "is as inspiring as it is complex and difficult. We have to consider whether the system now existing in Bengal is capable of meeting the demand, which has developed so rapidly in recent years, and will certainly develop yet more in the future ; if it is not so capable, how it can best be modified. . . ." How stale does the statement of 'Objects and Reasons' annexed to the Government Bill read beside these observations of the Commission, ringing as they do with a note of dignity and sincerity. And the 'demand' referred to here is the "growing demand of the people of Bengal for educational facilities," and as they pithily observe, "it is one of the most impressive features of our age. It is in itself healthy and admirable. It is increasing in strength and volume every year. But owing in part to social conditions, and in part, to the educational methods which the traditions of the last half a century have established, this powerful movement is following unhealthy and unprofitable channels ; and unless new courses can be cut for it, the flood may devastate instead of fertilising the country. Thus the problem with which we have to deal is by no means purely an academic or intellectual problem. It is a social, political and economic problem of most complex and difficult character ; and the longer the solution is postponed, the more difficult it will be. . . ." Thus the problem of meeting this 'growing demand' 'altogether healthy and admirable', but 'increasing in strength and volume every year', the problem, in its vast setting, which embraces the entire life of the people



and touches its innermost depths, the problem of diverting this powerful movement from its present 'unhealthy and unprofitable channels', into newer, saner and really natural courses of fruition, which is sure to infuse a new life into the body politic and to elevate the community as a whole, is at once a 'social, political and economic problem' ; it is no less, an academic and intellectual problem, which will lead itself to solution only by the combined intellectual, moral and material resources of the community, by its collective sagacity and constructive statesmanship. Time is long past for any tinkering measure or half-hearted attempt, far less for a complacent indifference or communal interference or racial or individual egoism and vanity.

The problem has not assumed its gigantic proportions in a day ; that the existing system was shaking to its foundations under unexpected and excessive strain and the situation was long deteriorating was borne out by the Report of Lord Curzon's Commission ; it merely brought into prominence the prevailing and accruing evils ; but the Government, as we have seen, was indifferent to the urgency and magnitude of the problems ; the seriousness and complications of the educational situation in the country left them unmoved, leading inevitably to a nation-wide and many-sided tragedy in the steady impoverishment of the community, economic, intellectual and moral. The illuminating review of the Sadler Commission, no doubt, threw a flood of lurid light on the numerous and dangerous evils of the tottering system ; but their 'constructive policy' was calculated to remove these evils and renovate the system ; and we shall naturally fail to appreciate and assess both this review and the constructive policy, unless we have clearly in our view the principal stages of the progress of education they reviewed, as well as the characteristic features of this progress which determined the character of the problems facing

us to-day. We might at once say, the magnitude and complications of the problems are nowhere more marked than in the field of secondary education, with which we are more directly concerned in our present study. As the Sadler Commission observed, "Except in the United States of America, in Canada and perhaps in Japan, we find nothing comparable to the eagerness for secondary education now shown in certain districts in India." And to-day it is not simply the schools that have practically doubled ; but the number of students at the top classes and sitting for the Matriculation has more or less trebled since the days of the Commission ; naturally, many of the more serious evils resulting from, or associated with, the working of the system—long on the breaking point under the abnormal strain—have become appalling and have thrown into bolder relief its characteristic darker features which have been sterilizing the course of educational development, almost from the beginning.

Apart, however, from the intellectual impoverishment and dwarfing of the manhood and, to some extent, the womanhood of the nation, that have followed the collapse of the worn-out system, there is one aspect of the situation which seems to over-shadow everything else in urgency ; it received the most serious attention at the hands of the Sadler Commission—it is the economic and political repercussions of the overcrowding of the schools and the colleges,—a phenomenon which was warmly welcomed by the Commission as it was pregnant with immense and rich possibilities to the nation, if rightly directed and properly handled by the State. But this was not to be ; the custodians of the State were quite indifferent to the beneficent possibilities of the striking movement—they had only a negative and a barren policy for it and allowed the situation to drift ; the situation, in the days of the Commission, was not, however,

half so grave as it is now. Even if the intellectual and academic side of a big educational problem like ours might lend itself to leisurely treatment, its economic repercussions cry for immediate solution ; it is, after all, the economic unsettlement and economic unrest and tension that turn out to be the determining factors in revolutions and radical social and political changes in the world. To-day it is the economic reactions of the progress of education—the economic repercussions of the problem of education—that constitute a most serious menace to the whole community. The Sadler Commission was duly alive to the gravity of the situation in the country, worsened and complicated by the economic reactions of the abnormal educational development ; nor did they minimise the immense difficulties inherent in the long neglected problem which they approached rightly as ‘a social, political and economic problem’ and not purely ‘an academic and intellectual’ one ; but beyond their realization of the gravity of the problem in its social, political and economic aspects, they could go no further ; they were precluded by their terms of reference from dealing with the problem in all its aspects, as fully as they did in its intellectual and academic side. It was surely extremely unfortunate—as it was a futile and short-sighted policy—to exclude from the scope of their labours, a full investigation into—with a view to suggest remedial measures for—the social, political and economic aspects of the very problem in regard to which they were called upon to frame a ‘constructive policy’. To ignore the serious social, political and economic repercussions of the immense educational problems of a vast and ancient country like ours, dragged as it has been into the currents and cross-currents of the modern civilization, to refuse to deal with the grave social complications inseparable from the working of a massive educational system, to underestimate the vitalizing influences of the dynamic forces of

progress on the emotional minds of young Bengal, to refrain from recognising the inevitable reactions of the young and ardent mind when education has done its work and stimulated its natural yearning for the beautiful, the great and the glorious in life, and still to attempt to frame a 'constructive policy' in relation to the very problems is to attempt the impossible. But it is at once a truism and an irony that our benevolent British rulers, in imitation of the efficient British methods, would appoint one roving Commission after another, with all its elaborate paraphernalia saddling the poor Indian tax-payer with its enormous cost, but would not have the breadth of vision to give it sufficient liberty of action or comprehensive enough terms of reference, so that fullest investigation of the problems in all their aspects and bearings might be made and proper and adequate remedial measures found. Thus to exclude from the purview of the Commission presided over by Dr. Sadler the 'social, political and economic' repercussions of the educational problem is to defeat the very purpose of a proper inquiry ; yet this was what the Government of India did in their terms of reference issued to the Commission. But the economic tension and unemployment—not to speak of the political and social unrest—resulting from the working of the educational system were seldom absent from the official mind ; only there was the absence of the necessary courage of conviction and statesmanship to rise to the occasion and grapple with the problems in the proper spirit and with proper measures ; there never was, however, any dearth of platitudes and pious hopes in high quarters. A little more than a decade before Lord Chelmsford announced the appointment of the Sadler Commission, one of His Lordship's predecessors, Lord Minto, had expressed his concern—in the course of a Convocation speech—in connection with the question of unemployment in the ranks of University graduates but hoped that . . . "with

each succeeding year the growth of home industries . . . . together with the restoration of Indian Arts and Letters, will throw open fields of employment which now scarcely exist for those who need never think that they have wasted their time in the University. . . .”

More than ten years later, Lord Chelmsford also expressed his anxiety at the extreme narrowness of the educational courses and at the very gloomy outlook of the educated youth owing to his strikingly low, almost desperate, prospect in life. In the course of his visit to the University Law College, His Lordship inquired one of the students as to why he was taking up Law as his vocation in life, meaning presumably that too many young men were taking up Law. But this particular student gave a pithy and pathetic reply ; ‘what else is there for one to take up, My Lord’, he answered the high personage. Lord Chelmsford was greatly impressed with the deplorable and desperate state of things in the field of education in Bengal, that this answer had disclosed, and he feelingly referred to this incident in the course of his Convocation Address at the Calcutta University in 1917 when he announced the appointment of Calcutta University Commission. But it happens times without number in the annals of British administration in India that at the time of translating into action a pious wish or a lofty resolution the hidebound administrators, who generally hold in the hollow of their hands the reins of government, fail to rise to the occasion and lack the sagacity and breadth of outlook necessary for the purpose. The most glaring examples of bureaucratic narrowness of outlook and reactionary tendency in the highest official quarters were the Despatches of the Government of India to the Secretary of State in 1919 which aimed at a whittling down of the Montague-Chelmsford scheme of Reforms ; and Lord Chelmsford who was a joint signatory to the Reforms Report was also a signatory to

these reactionary Despatches which sought, amongst other things, to retain in official hands control in the vital field of higher education, in opposition to the recommendations of the Functions Committee.

We have, however, to be grateful to Sir Sankaran Nair and to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament that the mischief was not actually done. But the history of the Government's handling of educational, political and economic problems tells a different tale. The Sadler Commission had the frankness and sagacity to point out the serious defects in the terms of reference issued both to the Education Commission of 1882 and to the Indian Universities Commission of 1902, which prevented both these Commissions, composed as they were of eminent educationists and public men and cost as they did enormous amounts of public money, from dealing fully with the problem of public education as a whole. And the results on both these occasions were the emergence of a partial picture and the absence of a proper constructive policy and measures calculated to meet the requirements as well as the repercussions of the problem, which the situation in the country demanded. Ever since the creation of the Department of Public Instruction in all the provinces and the establishment of the Universities in the three Presidencies in pursuance of the Policy laid down in the epoch-making Wood Despatch of 1854, the movement of western education had been making rapid strides ; till by the time when in 1882 the Indian Education Commission laboured, "the educational movement", as the Sadler Commission said, "had obtained so great a momentum of its own that it was already, in Bengal, if not in other provinces, beyond the control of the Department of Public Instruction. We have observed how this had come about, specially in the sphere of secondary education, during the decade preceeding 1882. The Commissioners do not appear to have

realized the significance of this change ; in their report they nowhere explain it clearly or analyze its causes ; and if they had grasped it, they were, as we shall see, precluded by the terms of their reference, from dealing with the problem as a whole." During the next two decades that followed Lord Ripon's Commission, there was 'an extraordinary rapid development both of high schools and of colleges' which put so severe a strain upon the existing unrevised University system—and organization—that 'it broke down under the strain', and the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 was appointed so that "the University system, left untouched by the Commission of 1882 should be overhauled. . . . The Report of the Commission, therefore, and the Act of 1904 which was based upon it, aimed not at any fundamental reconstruction of the Indian University system, but at a rehabilitation and strengthening of the existing system. And just as the Commission of 1882 was excluded from considering the University problems, so the Commission of 1902 was excluded from directly considering school problems, with the result that, equally with its predecessor, it was unable to deal with the problem as a whole. . . ."

Before we come to the interesting history of the development of western education in our midst, we had better note two significant facts—which have come into prominence from a study of the past ; we shall then be able to understand aright the great Problems of Education as they have now developed in all their implications and repercussions. In the first place, we have to bear in mind that it is essentially the same system and the same organization which from altogether small beginnings in the fifties of the last century have been functioning in the country and have of late assumed such tremendous proportions with ramifications into the remotest corners of this vast land ; our educational system and organization, thus, have practically remained

unchanged while throughout the world not only academic organizations and systems but also civic, political and economic, in fact, entire social, structures have crumbled down or have been replaced by newer ones which have cropped up to meet the demands of newer forces and newer order of society ; even in India, a subject country under a conservative and autocratic foreign rule, far-reaching constitutional reforms have been introduced within this protracted period, not to speak of the radical changes in the civic, economic, and even social, spheres ; but the constitution of the University which plays a prominent part in the whole field of education, and the organization of the Department of Public Instruction, which seeks to control and direct a large portion of the educational activities in the Province, remain unchanged. So that the entire educational system—planned and organized long ago to meet very limited demands of the last century—could not naturally keep pace with the great intellectual movement which swept past the western countries and came over to India, destined as it was to play a great part in stimulating the forces of progress and the process of national awakening all over the East ; naturally, too, our system reached a breaking point even in the latter part of last century, under the impact of new forces and great changes around.

We now come to the second prominent fact ; our rulers—to keep up their ideals of benevolent despotism which shakes off the superfluity of benevolence in the actual functioning of the government—appointed, as we have seen, three Commissions, with a view to furthering the cause of educational progress and fruiton, which as a civilized Christian Government they were bound to do, at any rate they professed themselves bound to do. True to their bureaucratic traditions, when Lord Chelmsford's Government formulated the terms of reference for the Calcutta University Commission,



they laid stress on 'the present requirements of university instruction and organization' and practically excluded from the scope of their inquiry and labours, the striking 'social, political and economic' repercussions of the great Educational Problem, the entire unmistakable, uncontrollable impact of the educational movement—itsself an integral part of the Renaissance Movement—upon the entire body politic, upon the entire life of the community ; whether there was a deep political motive or merely a short-sighted policy, behind the exclusion, from the earlier Commissions' consideration, of the 'social, political and economic' reactions of the powerful movement of education and of the progress of Western ideas and ideals in the country, there was not the slightest justification for it ; nothing but sheerest perversity would ignore the massive and majestic movement which had already been at work, transforming and galvanizing the quiet and sequestered life of the people, accustomed to move into its traditional grooves, into newer activities and yearnings, into newer hopes and conflicts, into newer joys and agonies. Commenting on the value and scope of the work of the Education Commission of 1882, the Sadler Commission rightly observed, "It is impossible to estimate aright the educational development of this period without considering it in the light of the concurrent political development. Fifty years' study of English literature, English history and English political theories had made the educated classes of India, and specially of the *Bhadralok* of Bengal, familiar with the phrases and forms of Western politics, and had inspired them with the desire to reproduce in India the methods of self-government which seemed to be triumphant in the West. The Indian National Congress was soon to begin its sittings ; it could never have met or brought together in common consultation, the representatives of all the races and languages of India, if the spread

of English education had not created a common vocabulary and a common set of political ideals. . . .” We have only to observe in passing that neither this Commission nor any other was charged with the important task of formulating a ‘constructive policy’ to meet the growing extra-academic factors which have their powerful reaction and repercussion not only on the course and character of educational development but also on the life and progress of the nations all the world over.

But as we have seen, even if their terms of reference restricted the scope of their inquiry and activities, the Sadler Commission had a clearer perspective and a more human understanding, and so, had a larger conception of their task than most of the Commissions and Committees which are practically a permanent feature of the British rule in India ; therefore their approach was more accurate ; thus, they were enabled to reach the heart of the complicated and immense Problem—in fact, of a number of problems—which had baffled two Commissions and eluded successive administrators and statesmen in India ; thus could they have a grip on, and deal with, the Problem practically in all its reactions and in its entire and enormous setting, even though they could not formulate ‘a constructive policy’ in regard to its many important but inevitable ramifications and repercussions ; probably, because they felt their hands tied up in this respect ; hence, probably, there was no direct reference to the political, economic or social implications of the Problem in the exhaustive questionnaire that they extensively distributed ; nevertheless they did dwell upon some of these aspects of the educational problem in Bengal in no uncertain terms. Referring to one of these aspects of the Problem, they said, “. . . there is in Bengal, a large number of men who, after having either obtained university degrees, or reached an earlier stage in the university course, find

that there are no outlets available for them such as their academic standing justifies them in expecting. . . . When we consider the humble status and low pay of the many of the posts with which university graduates are compelled to be content, it is impossible not to recognise that there is some justification for this sense of injury. It is impossible also not to recognise that a system which leads to such results must be economically wasteful and socially dangerous, and must in the end lead to the intellectual impoverishment of the country.

It is inevitable that men of ability who, after an arduous training find themselves in such a situation, should be deeply discontented, and should be inclined to lay the blame—as is the natural temptation of the dissatisfied in all lands, and above all in India, upon the Government of their country''. We had previously referred to the anarchist movement in Bengal and tried to show that a statesman-like, comprehensive and constructive policy in the field of education, supplemented by proper and adequate measures calculated to allay deep-rooted political discontent and alleviate economic distress and unrest which came in the wake of British Rule and were intensified by the spread of western ideas and ideals and the diffusion of western education in our midst would have stemmed the tide of the fatal, subversive activities connected with the movement ; an adequate measure of real practical sympathy, of humanity and Christian charity on the part of our rulers would not have drowned their understanding of the generating causes of the movement in an excess of bureaucratic egoism and arrogance and would have shaken their faith in protracted courses of barren and relentless repression ; a clearer vision and calmer judgment would have enabled them to realize that the logical application to our country of the principles of government and administration which they would uphold

in their own country—which, as Macaulay had the sagacity to warn his countrymen, would be an inevitable eventuality—was the best way of tackling this direct by-product of their rule and all that followed in its train in India. Political discontent and economic unrest—even when driven underground and into dangerous channels—not to speak of the irresistible urge and yearning for a fuller and truer life—which invariably accompany educational expansion and development—must be dealt with, with generous statesmanship ; no reformer in the realm of education can afford to ignore the workings of political and economic factors on individual and society, uplift of which is the aim of education.

Precluded as they were from dealing directly with these aspects of the problem, the Sadler Commission found it, none-the-less, incumbent upon them to refer to these political and economic repercussions and unrest following in the track of the intellectual and educational movement in the country ; and they referred, with refreshing candour, to this inevitable impact of the West, which, neglected at the beginning, became uncontrollable in course of time. “The anarchist movement,” they wrote, “which has been so distressing a feature of recent years in Bengal has, by some, been attributed largely to the influences of these discontented classes (mentioned above) ; and undoubtedly it has drawn among them many of its recruits. This does not mean that the colleges of the University have been, as has sometimes been alleged, in any large degree centres of revolutionary activity. Naturally the wave of unrest that has passed over Bengal has found readier welcome among students than in other classes of the population ; the ferment of new political ideas, drawn from the West, has of course worked most strongly among the students of western politics and thought. But it has been in some of the high schools rather than

in the colleges, that the most reckless agitators have found their most fruitful fields. The reasoned discipline of scholarship is hostile to madness of anarchy ; and the better that discipline is made, the more sane and healthy must be its influence. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the existence, and the steady increase, of a sort of intellectual proletariat not without reasonable grievances, forms a menace to good government ; specially in a country where, as in Bengal, the small educated class alone is vocal. It must be an equal menace whatever form the Government may assume. So long as the great mass of the nation's intelligent manhood is driven, in ever increasing numbers, along the same, often unfruitful course of study, which creates expectations that can not be fulfilled and actually unfits those who pursue it from undertaking many useful occupations necessary for the welfare of the community, any Government, however it may be constituted, whether it be bureaucratic or popular, must find its work hampered by an unceasing stream of criticism, and of natural demands for relief which cannot possibly be met. . . ."

Leaving aside all these far-reaching reactions and repercussions of the immense Problem, left uncared for from decade to decade, it is almost a truism to state that our educational system had failed, as it was bound to do, to move with the times ; it failed to respond to the spirit of the age and lost all vital touch with the living, moving reality which is life. Education to be of real value and be an effective force in society must not, however, be a sterile and static affair but be a living and dynamic force capable of constantly adjusting itself to the changing circumstances, to the changing necessities of its age and place, without sacrificing its basic and abiding principles. It is a great pity that the eloquent spokesmen of the British ruling classes who would proclaim from the house top that the mission of

England in India is not exploitation, political or economic, but 'education in the broadest acceptance of the term', would be so utterly lost to all sense of humour as to persistently shut their eyes to the fundamental fact of this sheer immobility and sterility, and virtual collapse of the system of education they had introduced in the fifties of the last century. While in the west, education had long shaken off its shackles of subservience to the Church and the State so as to be able to maintain the living touch with, and shape, the life of the people in the light of newer ideals and values, and in its newer settings, the fetters which were imposed on our system, the fetters which placed it between the Scylla of the domination of the University curriculum and degree and the Charybdis of Government control and influence, were never removed ; under these double-edged subjection—and under the weight of extreme financial stringency—the life and the individuality of the institutions, specially of the secondary schools, were steadily crushed. Time was when education and culture were sought to be placed on a high pedestal, apart from the life of the community, when education was believed to thrive in the cloistered seclusion or sought to be confined to the higher strata of society, 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife', unrelated to the needs of, and out of harmony with, the life of the nation ; but to-day, the needs of the community, the interests of the nation, must govern the character and aims of popular education. The individual, and the collective, life of the people, the national life in its entirety and at its base—but not apart from the international, and composite, life of the humanity—has acquired a paramount importance in the realm of education and culture. So that no educational institution, however great or humble, no system, however old or flourishing, can afford to work in isolation or fail to adjust itself to the life and needs of the community. As the

Sadler Commission said, "But transcending them all . . . . is the interest of the community as a whole. The interest of the community is inseparably involved in the work of every school, and specially in that of schools which receive a formal recognition implying a guarantee for fitness for the work which they propose to do. . . . Education, however, important to the individual, and therefore rightly adjusted to the individual requirements, is also a matter of public concern and therefore calls for incessant adjustments to the public needs. . . .'" Hence the problem before the reformer in Bengal is not simply to bring about a re-orientation in educational policy and aim so as to make it responsive to individual needs and national requirements but also to evolve a synthesis, a harmony, between the individual needs and national requirements, which will steer clear of the dangerous and distressing evils defeating the very purpose of our education ; at this stage, the problem must be treated not only as a purely educational problem but as a social, political and economic problem, which no Government in India has ever done.

## CHAPTER VI

### EARLIER STAGES OF THE PROGRESS OF WESTERN EDUCATION

Macaulay's historic Minute—Process of Downward Filtration—Act of 1837 and Government Resolution of 1844—Western education becomes the only passport to 'Government service and professional distinction', its serious after-effects—Hindu *Bhadralok* class enthusiastically takes it up—Its unique contribution to modern India—Sadler Commission's striking tribute to it—Its aptitude and traditions mould the course of the progress—India's traditional learning and trained intellectual powers, their contact with the new learning of the West, a great epoch in Indian history—The next stage in the progress, the Wood Despatch, the greatest landmark in educational history—The policy and principles enunciated in it—Their effects on the working of the system, the increasing impotence of the Department of Public Instruction and the rising importance of the University—the progress of India's Renaissance Movement in the contact of cultures and in the play of ideals.

How our education failed to keep abreast of the times and adjust itself to the changing needs of the succeeding generations, how it thus failed to serve the best interests of the community, will be better understood if we have a general idea as to the different stages it progressed through in the course of its development in our midst ; hence we would take a rapid retrospect of the past before we come to deal with the findings of the Sadler Commission on the later regrettable tendencies and consequences of the working of the educational system, and its ultimate failure, in Bengal. Macaulay's historic minute of February 1835 might be said to mark the beginning of the first stage of the progress of western education in India, inasmuch as its adoption by Government signalized the victory of western school over the oriental ; the main principles governing the policy thus



adopted by the State were that first, Government would keep up an absolute neutrality in religious matters ; and secondly, that the Government would devote its resources and its energies mainly 'to the maintenance of the schools and colleges of western learning, taught through the medium of English.' It was readily assumed 'if western education was introduced to the upper classes it would 'filter down' by a natural process to the lower classes' here ; this pious wish and assumption were not prompted by real statesmanship or any deep solicitude for the diffusion of education on western lines amongst the Indians and it proved to be unwise and unwarrantable ; but the policy chalked out continued to be followed till it was replaced by one far more broad and comprehensive, one which came to be of far greater significance, in 1854. In the field of higher education including secondary education, the Government were responsible for founding several high schools in the Districts, as also some colleges the most important of which must be the Medical College in 1835 ; and in view of the prevailing prejudice, the Sadler Commission was justified in paying an handsome tribute to the courage of Pandit Madusudan Gupta 'in defying an ancient prejudice by beginning the dissection of the human body' which 'marks an era in the history of Indian education almost as important as Macaulay's minute.' But more significant were the effects of the Act of 1837—'whereby Persian ceased to be the official language of the courts'—and of the Government resolution of 1844 whereby it was decided that 'thenceforward preference would be given, in all appointments under Government, to men who had received a western education'. It must, of course, be noted in this connection, that the numbers both of the students reading in the Government Colleges in Bengal, Behar and Orrissa—there were only 129 in 1854—and of the candidates appearing at the English

examination for the selection of candidates for Government appointments were very small. But even during this earliest period, at this very first and humble stage of the progress of western education two of the most distinctive features came into prominence which have moulded, to a large extent, the course of all subsequent progress, and conditioned the working of the system of education in Bengal—and in India, too. The emergence of English as the court language in place of the old and learned Persian, the Musalmans naturally resented and they kept themselves aloof from the study of English and from the movement of western education ; the Hindu *Bhadralok* class, which has supplied its 'corps . . . of officials to every successive Government in Bengal', was left practically in sole possession of the field with the virtual withdrawal of their Musalman fellow-subjects ; and they took to English literature and history and adopted western education and culture with remarkable enthusiasm and zeal, 'which was to lead to such momentous consequences, political as well as intellectual'. Hence it could be very well asserted, as the Sadler Commission said, that before the next great stage in the development of western education was reached 'the system of English education had definitely taken root in Bengal.'

But we have seen—and quoted at length from the Report of the Sadler Commission to show—how the accidental connection between the new western education and 'Government service and professional distinction', established through the association, from the earliest stages, of the Hindu *Bhadralok* class who began to take to all the three prominently and seriously, came during the first quarter of the present century, to have a disastrous effect upon large sections of the community ; but even before the next great step forward was taken and the comprehensive and far-reaching policy enunciated in the Despatch of 1854 was

adopted in India, hence even before the establishment of the Universities, western education and training became the only avenue of 'Government service and professional distinction.' In the earlier stages of its expansion in our midst, this intimate association of western education with a bright prospect and easy and almost assured prosperity in life either in any of the Government services or in a professional career had undoubtedly given it a necessary impetus and recognition ; this bright prospect of education stimulated its progress and popularity when it was, in the early forties of the last century, struggling to make a headway, competing with its formidable rival, the Oriental School and contending against the stubborn prejudices of the powerful and cultured elements in the Muslim society ; but in the later stages of its progress—during the last fifty years or more—this unfortunate association between material prosperity and academic proficiency and fame—through the channel of University examinations and degrees—came to have a disastrous influence upon the whole course of education imparted to the hundreds and thousands of our young manhood and womanhood ; thus our examinations began to have a crushing dead weight, and a fatal sterilizing effect, upon the working of the entire system.

We have now to refer to the other fact of overwhelming importance to the progress of western education—the fact of its association, from the very beginning, with the *Bhadralok* class in Bengal. It is the intelligentsia all the world over, which acts as the nerve-centre of the body politic and the custodian of the cultural heritage of, and consequently holds a unique place in, the society ; even though it is invariably very small in number in comparison with the artisans and manual labourers whose labours sustain the nation and produce the national wealth ; in the nineteenth century India, it was the classes known as *Bhadraloks* in Bengal which

enthusiastically took to western education and culture, adopted western scientific and political methods, which came to be the intelligentsia of the land ; we are not directly concerned with the fuller but rather interesting history of the meteoric rise of this class of people into the realm of Indian politics, Letters, or Science, nor with their brilliant achievements and onerous work in these spheres which at once raised India, even though a subject and backward country, in the estimation of staid Victorian world and won her a place in the community of nations ; but we are interested in the fact that it was this class which found itself working, also manning, the system of education in the secondary stage ; it was practically the 'growing demands' from this class 'for educational facilities' which 'were one of the most impressive features of our age', which called forth the rapid and remarkable expansion of the system of education in the country indicated in the phenomenal rise in the number of educational institutions and of pupils coming to these institutions. Naturally the system itself with its enormous development and wide-ranging ramifications could not but reflect some of the distinctive characteristics which have marked the mental outlook and bend of this class. Now that an indecent attempt is being made by the present Ministry in Bengal to take over control and direction in the vast field of secondary education—it is from the keeping of this class that control is sought to be snatched away. If, to-day, the British ruling classes have changed their old policy towards this class and would fain exhaust the generous possibilities of their Christian nature on the devout heads of another community—which should be helped to come into its proper place in the economy of Indian life—it must not be forgotten that the political and educational progress of India under the auspices of British rule would have been a myth but for the glorious and sustained work and selfless pioneering zeal, but

for the inspiring idealism, the creative urge and the indomitable genius of this class ; if this class has dominated the public life as well as the administration and education of the country, to a large extent, it has also had the privilege to interpret the better mind of India and the spirit of India's immortal culture and contribute to the heritage of the whole humanity.

The *Bhadralok* class which has played so prominent, so brilliant, a part in the making of modern India, fighting against enormous odds, against social prejudices and political repression and tyranny, and have practically developed and worked the system of education for so long a period, so important and eventful, naturally holds in Bengal a place of peculiar significance in the economy of Indian life ; no study of modern history of India in any sphere is possible without adequate reference to this class ; we do not, therefore, hesitate to quote at length from the Report of the Sadler Commission on this point ; “. . . But it is not from the agricultural classes,” goes on the Report, “any more than from the commercial or industrial classes, that the eager demand for the educational opportunities has come, which has led to the remarkable results described above. The classes whose sons have filled the colleges to overflowing are the middle or professional classes commonly known as the *Bhadralok* ; and it is their needs and their traditions which have more than any other cause, dictated the character of university development in Bengal. Many of the *Bhadralok* are *Zamindars*, great or small, or hold land on permanent tenure under *Zaminders* ; but they seldom or never cultivate their own lands, being content to draw an income from subletting. Many, again, make a livelihood by lending money to the cultivators ; and the high rate of interest which they are thus able to obtain, is often adduced as a reason why they have abstained from the more precarious adven-

tures of commerce. They are thus closely connected with the agricultural community, over which they always held a real leadership ; and they are distributed in large numbers over every part of the country.

“Relatively few of the Musalmans are counted among the professional classes. The great majority of these classes belong to the three great Hindu literary castes, the Brahmins, the Vaidyas (doctors) and the Kayasthas (writers), who are relatively more numerous in Bengal than are the corresponding castes in any other part of India. *For untold centuries, they have been the administrators, the priests, the teachers, the lawyers, the doctors, the writers, the clerks of the community. Every successive Government in Bengal has drawn its corps of minor officials, and often also many of its major officials, from among them, the British equally with their Muslim predecessors. They have therefore always formed an educated class, and it may be safely said that there is no class of corresponding magnitude and importance in any other country which has so continuous a tradition of literacy; extending over so many centuries.* It has always been the first duty of every father in these castes, however poor he might be, to see that his sons obtained the kind of education dictated by the tradition of their caste.” (Italics are ours).

We have seen that even in the earliest period western education—through it, western knowledge and culture—came to be confined to, as it was welcomed enthusiastically by, the Hindu *Bhadralok* class ; but not only this important cultured class but also the literate elements amongst the Musalmans pursued, through the centuries preceding the British rule in India, their own traditional courses of study and had their own traditional system of education which was purely literary and, often, religious. The signal triumphs of science which extending the frontiers of human knowledge and Man’s dominion over forces of Nature

revolutionised modern life, the surging tide of modern thought and criticism which convulsed European society and opened its eyes to newer values and ideals in civilization, had but faint reactions on the placid and staid surface of Indian life and society ; while conception of basic principles and values in education and politics underwent radical changes in Europe, nothing could disturb the old unruffled and unchanging stream of Indian educational thought or the traditional cultural and social life of India, which are predominantly religious in spirit and outlook ; so that the educational institutions and cultural centres of the Hindus which had been flourishing and functioning from time immemorial in spite of multifarious changes in ruling classes and dynasties and in spite of the tremendous upheavals and unrest due to the devastating waves of successive foreign conquests and invasions, retained their traditional literary character and religious spirit—even after the new educational ideals and methods had gained a definite footing in the country ; nor was this persistency of the literary and religious traditions in Indian education and culture, in Indian life and society, peculiar to our country and our civilization ; religious traditions in literature and education die hard everywhere ; in England, the nursery of progressive thought and modern methods, the vigour and persistency of religious traditions and beliefs did not diminish in many of the outstanding personalities and academic centres until recently. The resultant effect of the working of all these factors was seen in the emphasis on the purely literary side of western education and culture, specially in its university curriculum, that the *Bhadralok* class began to lay, as also in their neglect of its practical side ; both of these significant facts naturally led to momentous consequences which governed the course of India's progress in the modern age and determined its character to a large extent.

The importance of this aspect of the past history had duly impressed the Sadler Commission and they were rightly conscious of its bearing on the present day problems in our education. “. . . But the traditional system of education,” they wrote of the system prevailing in the country before and after the rise of the British Power, “which has lasted for untold centuries, has always been predominantly, and in most cases, exclusively, literary in character: even the Vaidyas learnt their medical science mainly from books and oral tradition. When the British administrators began, in the early nineteenth century, to investigate the existing educational system, they found a network of elementary schools spread over every part of the country, supplemented by groups of *tols*, or institutions of higher learning, where the Brahmin *gurus* taught the traditional learning of the Sanskrit classics without fees. These institutions still exist, though in diminished numbers. . . . The Musalmans developed a similar system, though on a less elaborate scale; their *maktabs* for the elementary religious education for the many, and their *madrasas* for more advanced instruction of the *maulavis*, confined themselves to the sacred learning in the Arabic tongue, and to the court language of Persian, which the Musalman conquerors had established in India. Thus both among the literate Hindu castes and among the Musalmans, the traditional systems of learning were almost exclusively literary and religious in character. They consisted in the memorising vast masses of ancient writings, and commentaries thereon, handed down from generation to generation. They cultivated, in an extraordinary degree, the memory-power of the classes which had pursued these studies for centuries and the influence of these methods was necessarily deeply felt when these classes began to devote their attention to western learning. Both in their concentration upon purely literary studies, and in their reliance upon



memory-work, the indigenous systems of education helped to fix the character which was to be assumed by western education in India.

*It was a great epoch in the history of India when the intellectual powers trained by so many centuries of culture began to be turned from the ancient learning of the East to the new learning of the West.* The habits and traditions of the *Bhadralok* made it natural that when they seized upon the western system, they would mould it to suit their needs, emphasise its purely literary side, and leave undeveloped, its more practical sides. But the transition cannot be made in a moment. For half a century the new system competed with the old, and the allegiance of the *Bhadralok* was divided between them, probably not without misgivings. What we have witnessed during the more recent years has been, in effect, the adoption by the Hindu *Bhadralok* of the new western system as, in practice, a substitute for the old, and as the necessary training which all their sons must undergo. Meanwhile the Musalmans of the *Bhadralok* class, for the most part, stood aside from the system. . . . In recent years, they have demanded a fuller share of the new 'learning. And beyond them, we see the mass of cultivators, stirring at last, from their age-long acquiescence in the unchanging modes of life. . . .'" But with this last phase of the progress which has begun to disturb the 'placid, pathetic' complacency of the cultivating classes—which is a recent event—we are not much concerned at the present stage of our study. We need only remark that the turning of the 'intellectual powers trained by so many centuries of culture from the ancient learning of the East to the new learning of the West' is no doubt 'a great epoch in the history of India' as the Sadler Commission eloquently puts it; but this event of itself cannot usher in an epoch of vigorous intellectual progress or cultural fruition and

synthesis ; indeed it can and often does spend itself in the undirected exuberance and even wild injurious outgrowth ; but well directed and properly planned, the movement brought about by this unique contact, and even conflict of cultures and ideals and by the renewed play of intellectual powers and creative genius which, both in the East and in the West, have reached an acme of excellence, and worked wonders, can herald a new renaissance and inaugurate a new era not only in India but in the world—an era not of blind and arrogant national egoism, but of an enlightened progress and international harmony.

Thus was the ground prepared, thus the stage set, for the next great phase of the progress of western education and of the striking intellectual and cultural movement in India, following as it did directly in the track of 'Sir Charles Wood's epoch-marking education despatch of 1854' which brought in 'the most important epoch in the history of Indian education.' It must at the outset be acknowledged that the Despatch was a great charter, the greatest, in the history of education in British India ; in the breadth of outlook, in the comprehensiveness of scope and the firmness of its grasp of the actualities of Indian situation, and in the sincerity of its purpose and loftiness of principles, it stands in a class by itself ; we would quote from the Sadler Commission on this important matter. ". . . The despatch of 1854", goes on their Report, "was, in its main conception, a bold, far-seeing and statesmanlike document. It imposed upon the Government of India the duty of creating a properly articulated system of education, from the primary school to the University ; perhaps its most notable feature was the emphasis it laid upon the elementary education, hitherto disregarded by Government, and therefore its implicit repudiation of the more extreme forms of 'filtration theory'. To carry out this constructive work, it ordained the creation

of a Department of Public Instruction in every province, with a staff of inspectors ; and it clearly anticipated that this department would undertake the direction of all educational policy—an anticipation which was destined to be disappointed, specially in Bengal.

In the belief that Government activity alone could never suffice to create such a system as it contemplated, it broke away definitely from the practice followed since 1835, whereby most of the available public funds had been expended upon a few Government schools and colleges, and instituted a systematic policy of 'grants-in-aid', to be distributed by the Departments of Public Instruction to all institutions which should reach an approved standard. . . . This policy was modelled upon the educational policy of the British Government of the date. The plan was that every honest educational agency, whether religious or not, should be encouraged to the utmost, under the inspection and direction of a Government department, and with the encouragement and assistance of the local officers of Government, upon the value of which emphasis was laid''.

We need not at this stage go into the details of what in the opinion of the Sadler Commission constituted 'the most important sections of the despatch in which the establishment of the provincial universities was advocated' ; we would only remark that the universities, imperfectly constituted as they were—and as the foremost of them still is—came, through their system of affiliation and recognition and through their examinations and degrees, to dominate the whole field of education, specially as the influence and the activities of the Departments of Public Instruction—which were intended by the authors of the Wood Despatch to 'undertake the direction of all educational policy'—came to decrease 'due to a diminution of Government expenditure on secondary education'. The principles underlying this

unsound and ill-conceived policy which the Government followed ran counter to the fundamental principles enunciated in the Despatch and proved disastrous in its consequences, as Sir Sankaran Nair, we have already seen, firmly held. Unfortunately for India, the comprehensive policy, underlying, and the sound and lofty principles enunciated in, the Despatch of 1854 were not faithfully and consistently followed by the successive Governments in India ; but the one immediate result of the inauguration of the system of grants-in-aid outlined in the Despatch—or rather what followed quickly in the wake of pursuance of its policy—was the rapid increase in the number of secondary schools that sprang up under private management and asked for Government grants ; to be exact, “there were only 47 schools in the whole of Bengal, Behar and Orissa in 1855 ; within eighteen months of the inauguration of the new system 79 English schools had applied for grants. By 1871 there were 133 high schools, and no less than 551 schools of the lower (middle English) grade. By 1882 the number of high schools had risen to 209. . . . But the most striking feature of the story is that while there was a very large increase in the total number of high schools, there was, during the decade 1871-1882 an actual decrease in the number of Government schools, and even of aided schools. This was due to a diminution of Government expenditure on secondary education. . . . The striking thing is that in very large numbers the organisers of Bengal high schools were discovering that these schools could be run on a self-supporting basis without Government grant and that they need not therefore submit to the conditions which the department imposed. The flood of candidates which made the rise of these schools possible all aimed at one single goal: success in the Entrance Examination of the University ; and the requirements of this examination were already the only regulating, or controlling

influence for a large part of the schools of Bengal''. Thus it was that the newly created Government Department of Public Instruction which was intended to have 'direction of all educational policy', and thus to encourage and support and guide all private educational efforts, found itself steadily losing ground and "influence over an important part of the educational system. Its place was being insensibly taken by the University''. In these peculiar circumstances in which the number of private schools rose without having to depend upon the Government grant and were not under the necessity of complying with the conditions imposed by them, the University, by granting them recognition, seemed to encourage them to dispense with the essential equipment for proper work ; thus these hundreds of schools were only or mainly busy preparing for examinations and "sending up candidates who, though they might get through an examination, were ill-qualified to follow, with intelligence, the University courses, and specially poorly equipped in English, the medium of instruction''. Herein lies the genesis of the soul-killing mechanical process that the entire system of our secondary and higher education has been reduced to in the recent years ; the immensity of the evils resulting from the baneful effects of examination that is corroding and sterilizing the ardent mind of the young in Bengal and dwarfing their natural growth has to be traced to the middle of the last century ; it is nothing short of a national tragedy that these evils have been suffered to grow to their present proportions during this protracted period, with both the Government and the intelligent public looking on ; and the principles underlying the famous Education Despatch were thus brushed aside, and its main purpose defeated. As the Sadler Commission nicely puts it, "The authors of the despatch of 1854 assuredly did not intend that their system should be so narrowly

conceived as it came to be in practice. They did not mean that university examinations as such, should be accepted as the sole tests qualifying for public posts ; they also recommended the institution of special civil service examinations. And while they manifestly contemplated that the ordinary subjects of study should be dealt with by the colleges, they did not intend that the universities should be deprived of all teaching functions ; on the contrary, they recommended the establishment of a number of university chairs, 'in branches of learning for the acquisition of which, at any rate in an advanced degree, facilities do not exist in other institutions'. Finally they were aware of a too purely literary course of instruction. Not only did they recommend that professional training, specially in medicine and law, should be given under the direct control of the University ; they insisted upon the necessity of training teachers of all classes of schools." . . . Nor were they unmindful of the importance of such "useful and practical" subjects as engineering and agriculture in any comprehensive scheme of education for a country like ours ; they thus justly hoped that the system of education that they were introducing would infuse into the people of India an enthusiasm and train up their intelligence and ability, "to develop the vast resources of their country . . . and gradually, but certainly, confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increase of wealth and commerce". But unfortunately for our country this lofty resolution, this pious hope, the sound educational principles, nay the entire policy underlying the Despatch, were frustrated in the actual working when the men on the spot, the high officials as well as the administering officers of the Government were entrusted with giving effect to its provisions ; it is a standing tragedy in the history of British rule in India that even if at times, a measure of generosity and humanity influences their policy

when it is formulated in the highest quarters, the actual administrators into whose hands falls the task of carrying it out, are seldom gifted with the understanding or sympathy or the constructive capacity required to work out patiently and successfully a scheme of reforms on a scale as wide as India ; even that unequivocal, epoch-making Queen's Proclamation which is looked upon as India's Magna Charta has been sought to be twisted and explained away, and its provisions, whittled down, and practically nullified. We have only to refer to the Sadler Commission's 'analysis of the present condition' and to their emphasis on the 'need for a new departure', to see how the policy as well as the intention underlying the Wood Despatch were given a wide berth by the men on the spot who, as pointed out by Sir Sankaran Nair, had 'themselves no scheme of education in view' but had "been going on making experiment after experiment . . . which they themselves have now to acknowledge had ended in failure". Truth is, as Sir Sankaran had very tersely put it, ". . . A foreign service with different ideals might be able to impart education to the leaders of the people, leaving them afterwards to make the necessary steps to impart education to the people of the country. But it appears to me, with all respect, that it is absurd to expect them to impart national education to a foreign race". Not only so, but it is natural for them as well as the whole hierarchy of ruling classes whose interests and outlook are quite different from those of the children of the soil to have 'opposed sound political and educational progress'. We do not intend now to make any detailed reference to the universities established in 1857 under the provisions of the Despatch or to the progress of higher education ; we will only content ourselves with remarking that the establishment ever on 'ample and generous scale' of the Presidency College at Calcutta could have been no justification for condemning

the University of Calcutta—long after the London University its model, had undergone a welcome academic transformation—to the impossible and intolerable position of a mere ‘degree-giving and examining body’, ‘of a group of administrative boards’ having ‘no direct contact with the real work of teaching’, or with the functioning of the system of education in its academic and intellectual aspects, but at the same time exercising a predominating influence over the whole system through its examinations and affiliations and recognition ; there were, however, provisions in the Despatch for giving a reality to the life and character of the universities by means of ‘teaching functions’, by the ‘establishment of a number of university chairs’ ; as the colleges the real ‘places of learning’ multiplied, and began to develop without any living and salutary touch with the University which had not even its usual ‘power and duty of supervision over the staff and equipment of the colleges’, it was only natural for the tendency to grow, which disregarded the strict requirements of efficiency and favoured, instead, the increase of the numerical strength of the students ; how great was this increase will be evident in the fact that in place of only 129 and another smaller number in 1854, there were in 1882, 2394 students in Government colleges, and 1433 in non-Government colleges.

This welcome rise in the number of students receiving higher education in the different colleges in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, within ‘less than a generation’ truly represented ‘a remarkable development’ ; this was really the redeeming feature of the progress of western education which though it was not following the course chalked out in the Despatch of 1854, had, as the Sadler Commission said, “with the affiliating university as its guardian, fully taken root in India, and most completely in Bengal. The university degree had become the accepted object of ambition, the passport to



distinction in the public services and in the learned professions. . . . Western education had made its way into the social system. All the principal leaders of Bengal society had now received some degree of western education, and could speak English. The time was fast approaching when the high school and the college course would be accepted as the correct and orthodox course for every boy of the Hindu literate class to follow. But the results of the great revolution were yet deeper than this'', and were many-sided, profound and far-reaching ; in the eloquent words of the Sadler Commission, ' . . . the intellectual powers trained by so many centuries of culture' coming into contact with the 'new learning of the West' cannot fail to be enriched and invigorated ; the opening of the flood-gates of European knowledge and culture through the medium of English literature—which is above all, the 'literature of liberty'—the study of European history and philosophy depicting the triumph of human individuality and reason—cannot fail to broaden the outlook and capture the imagination of the young and ardent in Bengal—and in India too—or to infuse into them a new enthusiasm, a new hope and a new yearning after a fuller life, or awaken into their sympathetic hearts a sturdy nationalism, an inspiring idealism, or give them a newer sense of values ; thus in the contact of cultures and ideals, in the play of new ideas and aims, in the throbbing of new hopes and newer yearnings, the great movement of renaissance and rejuvenation was at work, transforming the life and thought of the entire people, and touching the innermost depths of their being. And the brilliant galaxy of writers and orators, poets and patriots, philosophers and statesmen, scientists and dramatists, reformers and pioneers that sprang up and brought in a new era in Indian culture and revived the creative spirit of Indian civilization and were the torch-bearers of this mighty and majestic movement were

also the first products and votaries of the 'new learning' ; thus closes the first and a striking chapter of the history of the progress of western education and culture—a brilliant chapter in the history of modern India ; thus this progress—in the realm of education and culture in India—was interwoven, and synchronized, with the emergence and progress of the great Renaissance Movement in Bengal, which spread all over India and raised her from her suicidal stupor of centuries, from the vicious circle of her age-old egoism and fatal indifference. But we of the present generation, of the twentieth century India, must remember our debt to those ardent, pioneering souls, European and Indian, to those 'missionaries and Hindu reformers' who 'between them succeeded in arousing a remarkable ferment of new ideas in the Calcutta of the thirties' and thus helped in the realization of India's immortal spirit and the awakening of her creative genius, under the effulgent rays of the western sun—to David Hare and Carey, Marshman and Ward, Ram Mohun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and their noble compatriots ; if today India stands on the morning of her resurrection, struggling to bring forth a new epoch in her checkered history, amidst the distressing and darkening clouds of chaos—which will surely pass away—we must bow to those noble and selfless spirits of the last century who worked for a new cultural and educational movement in India.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION AND AFTER

No 'new departure' from the old policy—Prevailing tendencies in educational thought—India Government's Resolution—The Commission's policy failed to check the swelling course of evils—Sadler Commission's Review of its work, its main features—The plan of the Wood Despatch practically abandoned—Effects of the policy of 1882, disproportionate development; its deplorable features, left uncontrolled, lead to and intensify, the colossal evils continuing to this day—'Extensive, not intensive, growth'—The Commission's attempt to remedy the rigidity of academic courses by the development of 'modern side' of the schools—The Commission's faint glimpse of the solution of the disastrous anomaly in the educational sphere, its failure to recommend it.

We have now come to the point in our study from which we just diverted our attention—to the next stage in the progress of western education; it did not, however, mark a new epoch, as no 'great new departure' was made from the policy of the Despatch of 1854; it was at the beginning of this period—in 1882—which was said by the Sadler Commission to be 'the third great era in the history of Indian education', that the Indian Education Commission was appointed by the Government of Lord Ripon 'to review the working of the policy laid down in 1854'; we must at the outset repeat what the Sadler Commission said regarding the importance attaching to the work of this Commission: 'The importance of the Commission of 1882 is, therefore, not that it initiated any great new departure, but merely that it brought into prominence, and gave greater freedom of action to, forces which were already at work'. We have just stressed the phenomenal and 'remarkable development' of

secondary and higher education in Bengal indicated in the rise of the numerous institutions and in the rush of the students crowding therein ; as a direct result of the working of the system introduced under the provisions of the Despatch this development was more striking than any advance in the field of elementary education ; one of the main reasons adduced for this peculiar fact was that the available public funds were 'extremely' limited and unless pressure upon them due to the demands of other branches of education would relax, no large and adequate amounts could be released for any great expansion of the primary or elementary education as foreshadowed in the Despatch ; and the best way of achieving this relaxation of pressure upon the public funds available for western education was to rouse and stimulate all private agencies to work for the furtherance of the cause of this education which the Government found impossible to advance effectively, single-handed. The Despatch had also clearly laid down that the Government should altogether withdraw from that part of the field of education, from that area where private and non-official agencies were seen to be functioning efficiently ; as a necessary corollary to this policy it (the Despatch) 'even contemplated the ultimate abandonment by Government of direct control over many of its existing institutions' ; though as a matter of fact Government did not find it possible to 'abandon control' and responsibility for their own institutions but on the contrary felt called upon to found some more ; on the other hand, 'the remarkable development' of the western education, within less than a generation, was due, as we have already seen, to a striking enthusiasm and enterprise and public spirit in the *Bhadralok* classes, thanks to which hundreds of privately managed institutions sprang up all over Bengal ; time was ripe—it was felt in official quarters—for the Government to 'devolve most of its responsibilities for higher education upon

private agencies and concentrate its attention upon the primary field' ; another important factor had by this time cropped up ; thanks to the generous statesmanship of Lord Ripon, a substantial measure of self-government in the sphere of local affairs had been conceded by the establishment of municipal councils and district boards all over the country ; it was quite in the fitness of things that these popular local bodies should be thought worthy to be entrusted with large 'educational functions, such as have been already entrusted to school Boards in England during the preceding decade'. The Education Commission which was appointed, (with the well-known Sir W. W. Hunter as President, and Mr.—afterwards Justice—K. T. Telang as one of the Members), in 1882 to review the working of the policy as well as the principles enunciated in the Despatch of '54 was also charged with considering 'the best way' of fulfilling 'the wish of the Government that the municipal bodies should take a large and increasing share in the management of the public schools within their jurisdiction'. It must be admitted that—despite the severe criticism to which we had subjected the terms of reference narrowly limiting the scope of the Commission's work—there was no dearth of lofty ideas or pious wishes in the Government Resolution on the appointment of the Commission ; ". . . it would be altogether contrary," it ran, "to its (Government's) policy to check or hinder in any degree the further progress of higher or middle education. But the different branches of public instruction should, if possible, move forward together, and with more equal step than hitherto. . . . If satisfactory progress is to be made at all, every available private agency must be called into action to relieve and assist the public funds in connection with every branch of public instruction. In pursuance of this policy it is the desire of the Government to offer every encouragement to native gentlemen to come forward and aid,

even more extensively than before, in the establishment of the schools upon the grants-in-aid system. It is chiefly in this way that the native community will be able to secure that freedom and variety of education which is an essential condition in any sound and complete educational system. It is not, in the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council, a healthy symptom that all the youth of the country should be cast, as it were, in the same Government educational mould. Rather is it desirable that each section of the people should be in a position to secure that description of education which is most consonant to its feelings and suited to its wants''. But unfortunately the very evils which the Government wished to guard against and avert, and for which it wanted the Commission to devise proper measures became more and more prominent as the result of the working of the educational system which was fast becoming too rigid and narrow to adjust itself to the newer factors and to its growing ramifications all over the country; in the prevailing circumstances the situation could not but deteriorate as the one Department of State which was designed to have the 'direction of all educational policy' came to lose its influence over increasing numbers of institutions, and the University which ought to have acted as the 'guardian angel' was not in a position to enforce the requisite standard of efficiency and equipments in its institutions. Though large endowments were forthcoming for various institutions and all 'available private agencies' were called into action, though all private resources and enterprise and all public spirit and energy, and widespread yearning for a fuller life and wider education were, as far as possible, brought into play, there were no corresponding relaxation of the pressure upon, no proportionate release of, the public funds; and the Government could not or did not take any big step forward in the vast field of elementary education where 'alone Government was

to regard it as its duty to undertake direct responsibility for large expenditure' ; nor was any rapid stride made, or any striking progress achieved, in the fields of practical and technical instruction or of scientific education and training so as to bring up India on a line with the advanced countries of the West ; thus the hope of the Government that the 'different branches of public instruction should, if possible, move forward together' was going steadily to be frustrated from the very beginning.

Nor were the 'freedom and variety' secured to the system, which the Government of the day considered to be an 'essential condition in any sound and complete educational system' ; and in the absence of true freedom and variety in the institutions, all the 'youth of the country' was bound to be, as they really have been, cast in the same 'mould'. The problem then was, specially in Bengal—as it still is, only in an intensified degree—how to effect a true synthesis, a fruitful harmony, and the utmost and lasting co-ordination between Government endeavours and non-official efforts, between the state's duty and action and the individual enterprise and zeal, between the official experience and private enthusiasm and sacrifice, between the expenditure of public funds and the resources of the citizens, in the vast and ever-expanding sphere of public education in all its branches. But the Indian Education Commission, as we had seen, were precluded from dealing with the problem as a whole in the only comprehensive manner that a major problem in a vital sphere of life could—and should—be dealt with. The immediate and natural effect of the policy of withdrawal of Government's direct share of work and responsibility and initiative, without any suitable agency being called into existence to exercise the necessary powers of direction and control, in the sphere of education, was the rise of the numerous institutions springing up rapidly all over the

country, on the dubious and undesirable strength of their fee-income, which, more often than not, was uncertain and inadequate. "At no point," writes the Sadler Commission, "either in the Government Resolution appointing the Commission or in the report of the Commission itself, was it suggested that the upgrowth of a system of schools and colleges wholly dependent upon the small fees which the Bengal students could afford to pay would form a desirable solution of the problem. Yet this was the kind of system which was to result from the new policy . . . ." Indeed, no system could escape a steady and increasing deterioration, under which hundreds of poorly equipped and struggling institutions and a score of inefficient colleges were encouraged or had to depend upon the 'small fees which the Bengal students could afford to pay' ; not only this ; but a number of institutions sprang up on a purely commercial and proprietary basis ; many of these began to be run just as so many 'profit-earning' business concerns enriching the proprietors ; we have to note, however, that these deplorable tendencies, this serious state of things which had begun to sterilize the life and working of a large number of institutions in the last century continued long afterwards, corroding the whole system.

In the meantime, the entire policy of the Government was accepted by the Indian Education Commission ; as the Sadler Commission said, "The outstanding feature of its whole scheme was its anxiety to find means, at every stage, for the enlistment of the co-operation either of the local bodies or of the private agencies in the conduct of education of every type. The new local bodies, whenever they existed, were to be charged with the responsibility of developing and organizing education under the guidance of the Department, and it was recommended that they should be required to spend a certain portion of their revenues on this



work ; they were also to be empowered to conduct either secondary or collegiate institutions. In the primary field alone, Government was to regard it as its duty to undertake direct responsibilities for large expenditure, whenever necessary. . . . In general, therefore, the policy recommended by the Commission to the Provincial Governments was that they should withdraw as rapidly as possible from the direct control of secondary and collegiate institutions, except for the maintenance of a few models ; and that, for expansion in these spheres, private and local effort should be trusted, and encouraged to the maximum extent. . . .” That the principles formulated by the Commission were accepted and acted up to by the Government of Bengal was what the Sadler Commission found ; we would, however, like to point out, if, as Sir William Hunter’s Commission recommended, ‘private and local efforts were trusted and encouraged to the maximum extent’ by a liberal and sympathetic extension of the Government grants and help, if the hundreds of inefficient schools and the many colleges which reared up, and had to depend, upon the precarious fee-income, had been given the generous treatment and fostering care generally bestowed by the state in the Western countries upon educational institutions, the growing, serious evils of the system would have been checked in time before they could injure the academic life, and frustrate the educational efforts, of the country ; the whole course of educational development, then, would have been different yielding much more beneficent and salutary results than it has been doing for all these years and decades. So the Sadler Commission’s general observation regarding the faithful acceptance by the Government of the ‘principles laid down’ by the Hunter Commission has got to be qualified in view of ‘the deplorable results’ that followed, unchecked ; indeed it loses much of its weight beside the categorical indictment

of Sir Sankaran Nair against the Government policy and action in the sphere of education.

The vital problem of education of a whole people belonging to a vast country like ours cannot be properly tackled, much less solved, unless the ruling classes, those in charge of the machinery of the State, look upon it as a sacred national concern, a nation-wide trust, to be taken up with an earnestness, and worked with a zeal and thoroughness, worthy of the highest cause ; but the ruling classes in India, both the Government and its 'steel frame' the administrators—with some honourable exceptions—never treated the momentous question of Indian education as a great national obligation or gave it half as much importance throughout the whole course of their rule, as they did to the questions and policy affecting military or defence organizations or, what they are pleased to call, law and order. The policy of grants-in-aid to be distributed by the Departments of Public Instruction to all institutions which would reach an approved standard, the policy of 'ultimate abandonment by Government' of direct control over many of its existing institutions, the policy of concentration of Government's direct efforts in the sphere of elementary or primary education, which the authors of the 1854 Despatch formulated, not to speak of their intention of endowing the 'Universities with various 'chairs', was never faithfully followed by those into whose hands fell the task of giving practical effect to it. But the policy of the Despatch could have been successfully worked to the lasting benefit of India and England, if only the actual administrators in India could catch the spirit, the catholicity and idealism of Alexander Duff or Sir Charles Wood or Lord Ripon ; there is only one way of successfully administering the affairs of large masses of our fellowmen—the way of love and respect, as Tolstoy pleaded and as Mahatma Gandhi pleads. The British ad-

ministrators, however, missed this spirit and catholicity which had inspired the authors of the Despatch in England and many selfless pioneers in India and thus missed the broad purpose of educational progress in which 'a powerful movement finds expression.' Thus were they inclined to follow their own ideas and policies in the development of education in India, without caring much for the requirements of India or the principles enunciated in the Despatch. As the Sadler Commission said, ". . . If the plan had been followed as outlined in the Despatch, it is probable that the development of Indian educational system would have followed a different course."

In the meantime the new educational movement was fast gathering strength and volume ; within a generation, it got beyond the control of the complacent officials and the enthusiastic upper classes in India. "In 1854", truly wrote the Sadler Commission, "it was still possible for the course of educational policy to be effectively controlled by edicts from above ; and the Government decisions of 1835 and 1854 had exercised a determining effect. But by 1882 the educational movement had got so great a momentum of its own that it was already, in Bengal, if not in other provinces, beyond the control of the Department of Public Instruction. . . ." So the situation imperatively demanded that the course of Indian educational policy and the Indian educational development should be directed on the spot ; and unless there were proper and healthy channels for the phenomenal expansion that was taking place, the academic life as well as peace and progress in the country were menaced by the erratic uprush of the movement. But it was only men of sympathetic imagination and broad understanding—men of constructive statesmanship—who could regulate the powerful tide and direct it into fruitful channels ; there was none in India to save the serious situation in the

academic sphere in the later part of the last century. 'Edicts from above', pious wishes from across the seas, high sounding Resolutions of the India Government, without the driving force, the understanding sympathy and the constructive ability in the actual administrators—and the necessary active goodwill and enlightened statesmanship in the highest official quarters—could no longer control the unnatural course of educational development in India.

We have briefly touched upon the main recommendations of the Hunter Commission relating to the three spheres of educational development in India ; we are not directly interested in what took place in the sphere of primary education ; but we would only state that, contrary to expectation, there was no great progress, but "a decrease in the expansion of primary, relatively to secondary, education" as a result of "thrusting responsibilities upon local boards. . . . The preponderant and disproportionate development of the secondary branch which the Commission had deplored and hoped to cure were actually intensified between 1882 and 1902. . . . Nothing could more clearly show that it was not education at large but English education, specially English education, preparatory to University course, which aroused the enthusiasm of Bengal. . . ." But the responsibility for this 'disproportionate development of secondary education' of a purely literary type, practically cast in the same mould, must be shared both by the Government and public opinion ; and public opinion in India, particularly in Bengal, was then quite strong and alert—before and after the Indian National Congress began its momentous career, and the public life, though vigorous, had nothing of the massiveness of the post-War periods. It must be admitted in this connection that public opinion in India, the prominent public men who were the moving spirits of the progressive movement, were dazzled, to some extent, by powerful

currents of the brilliant civilization and culture of the West inundating the upper strata of the Indian society through the flood-gates of western education and knowledge and did not subject these currents as well as the peculiar development of western education and knowledge which was taking an unnatural, erratic course in India, to a proper and dispassionate criticism.

Some idea of the course of educational development in the country and of the effects of the impetus given to the movement of western education by the working of the policy formulated by the Commission of 1882 would be formed by these figures: High schools which were 209 in number in 1882 numbered 535 in 1902 in Bengal (as the province then was) ; the English schools including middle schools were 1481 in number in the same year and employed 12,000 teachers who taught about 250,000 boys ; there were only 54 under Government, and 35 under local boards, and all the rest, under private management and control ; more than a third of these did not get the benefit of Government grant and so did not, or would not, comply with their conditions ; the number of trained teachers were necessarily very small and a large number of them were not qualified at all ; but most of them were paid, as they are now, very miserable salaries. The best high schools 'under public management' had a salary scale ranging from Rs. 25/- to Rs. 200/- per month ; 'in the privately managed schools' the scale usually was from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 78/- per month. As the Sadler Commission wrote, ". . . . The average annual cost of a boy's training in a Bengal secondary school was Rs. 18/- as compared with Rs. 38/- in Bombay, Rs. 36/- in the United Provinces and Rs. 23/- in Madras. Manifestly it was impossible that good work should be done under such conditions and at so low a cost. Boys could be crammed for an examination ; except in rare instances, they could not be

given a sound training. It was because the salary rates for teachers were so low, and the demands for accommodation and equipment so unexacting, that venture schools could be run in large numbers on pupils' fees, though these were lower in Bengal than in any other province. That is to say, education in these schools was cheap because it was bad, and bad because it was cheap." It is to this 'deplorable' state of things revealed in this statement and in these figures that the genesis of the colossal tragedy that is being increasingly and solemnly enacted throughout the length and breadth of the country in the name of education has to be traced ; thus between the impotence of the Department of Public Instruction and inability of the University, between the failure of public opinion to exercise a salutary influence and the absence of a controlling and directing authority, the 'deplorable' course of educational development was left unchecked. As the Sadler Commission said, "In theory, it ought to have been the business of the Department of Public Instruction to see that these evils were remedied. But the Department was quite unable to undertake the function. Its inspectorial staff was neither large enough to keep in touch with all the schools, nor was the staff organized for this grade of work, even if it had the power to undertake it. But it had not the power. The Department had, and could have, no influence over any schools which did not accept grants-in-aid ; even upon those which did, it could not impose any exacting conditions, lest they should be placed in a disadvantageous position as compared with the private venture schools, and tempted to resign their grants and live on fees. . . . Over the venture schools the only controlling authority was that which was exercised by the University through its entrance Examination, which controlled the curriculum of higher classes, in all the high schools, Government, aided and unaided alike. The University did its best

to meet its responsibility by refusing to admit candidates from any school which it had not recognised. But the University recognition, although it gave valuable standing to the schools, was loosely and easily given. This was inevitable ; because the University had no machinery for inspecting or supervising the schools, and its governing bodies were not constituted with a view to this kind of work. . . .” We need not go into the details of the effects of the policy of the 1882 Commission, on the system of higher university education in Bengal which “consisted”, in the words of the Sadler Report, “in the transfer of Government Colleges to non-Government control and the creation of a number of new colleges under private management. . . The main results of the policy of 1882 was to stimulate the foundation of private colleges in all parts of the Presidency. In every case, these colleges grew out of the previously established high schools, . . . the cost of maintenance was nearly always met for the most part out of fees and small Government grants, and revenue and expenditure were commonly made to balance by the payment of exiguous salaries to the teachers, and by the avoidance of subjects of study which necessitated costly equipments. In some cases, the colleges were purely proprietary institutions run by the Head Master of the schools from which they sprang. Sometimes they were run at a loss . . . but as the flood of candidates for degrees increased with the increase of secondary schools, the colleges also became profitable.” But an ‘outstanding’ feature of these colleges was that though they imparted English education, they did it without any Englishmen helping in the task, and without their students having any contact with any Englishmen. This striking increase in the number of high schools and colleges was followed naturally by a corresponding increase in the number of students pursuing higher courses. There were

3,827 students in the colleges in 1882—of whom 2,394 were in Government colleges ; the number of the former in 1902 rose to 8,150, of whom only 1,937 were in the Government institutions.

As the Sadler Report says, 'practically the whole of this increase . . . was due to non-Government colleges which depended for their existence almost entirely upon the extremely low fees of the students and were hence incapable of providing adequate equipment.' Thus neither in the field of secondary, nor in that of university, that is, collegiate, education—in which the accepted policy of the Government was to restrict their expenditure and activities and retire in favour of non-official agencies and in which there was, we have seen, 'remarkable development'—nor even in the sphere of primary or elementary education in which it was the official policy to concentrate Government's efforts and expenditure, in which sphere, there was, contrary to expectation, no great 'development' and expansion—was there any trace of the dawning on the official mind, of the conception of education as a great national and state obligation ; never in the course of half a century that had elapsed between the Wood Despatch and the Act of 1904 was there any tangible realization by the officials in India of the immensity of the lee-way that ought to have been made up by the state in the sphere of education. Nor did the eminent Commissioners of 1882 rise above the official atmosphere by displaying their faith in a policy of a nation-wide educational expansion best suited to the growing, complex requirements of the country and the age ; yet the adoption by the state of a forward national policy in a varied course of educational development was of paramount necessity to India—as much today as in the eighties of the last century. It cannot but be regretted that they were not alive to the necessity of co-ordination of all the agencies in the sphere



of education under a popular and efficient central authority with full financial and executive powers, which alone could have directed the narrow and dangerous course into healthy and fruitful channels. But that was not to be. As the Sadler Commission writes: "Indeed, their main policy, that of reducing Government expenditure in this sphere, and encouraging local and private efforts, was essentially irreconcilable with any large scheme for deepening and strengthening the intellectual vitality of the colleges. Extensive, not intensive, growth was the necessary result of the policy which they recommended; and most of the new colleges which were stimulated into existence by their policy during the following twenty years were necessarily weak, understaffed and incapable of affording individual attention to the needs of students or of providing the varied courses of study practical as well as literary which were necessary for the healthy development of Bengal. The main feature of twenty years following 1882 was to be the rapid creation of colleges which depended wholly or mainly, upon fees, and thrived as coaching institutions, rather than as places of learning. . . ."

Before we come to the next stage of progress of western education demarcated from its past by the labours of Lord Curzon's Commission of 1902, we have to refer to two facts in connection with the Report of Lord Ripon's Commission of 1882. Impressed by the imminent 'danger' of a too purely literary course of study such as 'circumstances and tradition' were imposing upon all pupils, they strongly felt the necessity of cutting new and useful channels for this too stereotyped and unfruitful course that educational development had taken in the country. "It had been felt in all the provinces", they said in their Report, "and urged by many witnesses, that the attention of students is too exclusively directed to University studies, and that, no

opportunity is offered for the development of what corresponds to the 'modern side' of the schools in Europe. It is believed that there is real need in India for some corresponding course which shall fit boys for industrial and commercial pursuits, at the age when they commonly matriculate, more directly than is effected by the present system. It appears to be the unquestionable duty of that Department of State which has undertaken the control of education, to recognize the present demand for educated labour for all branches of commercial and industrial activity, and to meet it so far as may be possible with the means at its disposal." And they, therefore, recommended that "in the upper classes of high schools, there should be two divisions, one leading to the Entrance Examination of the University, and the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial and non-literary pursuits . . . that the certificate of having passed by the final standard, of either of the proposed alternative courses, be accepted as a sufficient general test for fitness for the public service." There was one other proposal which formed the subject matter of their deliberation but did not reach the stage of definite recommendation, which is worth our while to note ; for the Sadler Commission, working thirty five years after, practically came to the same conclusion in their search for a solution for the serious anomaly of divided responsibility and inadequate control in the sphere of secondary education in Bengal. "There was only one mode," they wrote, "in which the growing evils and deficiencies of the school system of Bengal, and the waste of young talent which they are causing, could be satisfactorily dealt with. This was the co-ordination and strengthening of all agencies that were concerned in the control of the schools—the Department, the University, and the various public interests involved. There could be no satisfactory solution until the

unhappy division of powers which was leading to such unfortunate results, and which was impairing the influence both of the Department and of the University, was brought to an end. Some sense of the need for such a reform was shown in the proposal, debated by the Commission that there should be instituted in each province "a consultative Board of Education consisting of representatives of the University, of the Department of Public Instruction, and of the Community at large". This reform was advocated on the ground that "it would, on the one hand, bring about and maintain a complete understanding between the Department and the University, and, on the other hand, it would be in a position as representing the feelings and wishes of the community at large, to aid the Department with information and advice on educational questions of every kind". The learned Commissioners, however, did not accept this proposal or the scheme contained therein "mainly on the ground that such a Board would become a sort of debating society which would only retard action". It did not occur to the Commission to recommend that this Board, instead of being a 'mere debating society' retarding action, should be invested with all the powers of control and direction some of which were indifferently exercised by the Department of Public Instruction and the University over the hundreds of secondary schools; it did not strike the eminent Commissioners that the only way to do away with the unhappy division of powers between the University and the Department, and to ensure proper direction and support to the numerous struggling schools and control those run on a profit-earning or commercial basis, was to create a central, popular and competent authority representing all the interests involved and endow it with all the functions and duties and resources necessary for the healthy and vigorous upgrowth

of the system which had long begun to move into dangerous channels and vicious circle ; Dr. Sadler and his colleagues were disposed to take a lighter view of the Commission's failure to make the proper recommendation in respect of this most vital but weakest point in the whole educational system, on the ground that review of the "powers of the University were definitely excluded from its purview" ; even if it were so the fact remained that the idea of a central board of authority came up not only to the surface of their consciousness but came to be deliberated upon by them ; it was sheer lack of imagination and constructive and courageous planning that stood in the way of the idea definitely gaining ground and being accepted. Or perhaps it was as yet too early in the day for the nineteenth century India, though under the benign British rule for over a century, to have an authoritative Board controlling the policy and directing the working of a vital part of her educational system—a Board in which Indians would have necessarily obtained a powerful voice and an effective representation, in view of the importance of their contribution and stake therein.

The other recommendation of the Commission for the development of the 'modern side' of the schools to divert the 'attention of the students' which was 'too exclusively directed to university studies' did not get a better fate ; this was quite natural in view of the rigidity of the official mind and inability of the bureaucracy to react properly to the new factors ; it was also due to the prevailing disinclination of the intelligentsia, the upper and middle classes, to curb down their enthusiasm for the purely university and stereotyped courses of study in favour of more practical, more modern and varied courses based on our national culture, and adopted to the growing needs of the country ; the failure to create and sustain a new zeal for the latter courses of study

responsive to the requirements of the country in various spheres of life and to the spirit of its culture and thus to leave the beaten track which was leading hundreds and thousands of nation's intelligent youths to the blind alley of despair and distress did not rebound to the credit of Government or the educated public ; but the responsibility for this dismal state of things, for the appalling waste of talent and energy and expenditure, resulting therefrom, must be shared both by the Government and, to some extent, by the leaders of public opinion ; for a true realization of the 'devastating', devitalizing academic conditions, and for the solemn warning to avert what is nothing short of a national tragedy on a gigantic scale in the vast field of country's higher education, we are indebted to Sir Michael Sadler and his colleagues who worked long after the Indian Universities Commission had laboured and reported. The better mind of India had yet to be roused to a proper realization of the extreme gravity of the situation in the vast field of education ; its constructive genius had yet to be lashed into action to check the dangerous, wasteful and erratic course it had taken as early as the eighties of the last century ; India had not then shaken off the fascination of European ideas in education ; and, no wonder, 'the policy of London seemed to be the last word in educational statesmanship'. India's creative urge in education awaited the driving force of a dynamic nationalism in the political and cultural sphere, to bring it forth in the very first decade of the next century which practically ushered in the massive movement for India's emancipation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ACT MARKS A NEW ERA

Indian Universities Act marks a new era, a significant change, in Indian politics and education—The movement of national education, an integral part of the dynamic national movement of the Swadeshi epoch in Bengal, its sad fate and its striking legacy in the meteoric rise of a brilliant national literature and a national University and three famous institutions in Bengal—The launching of the official measure in a tense atmosphere—The Act of 1904 brings about a fundamental change in the conceptions of functions and ideals of a University under the Act of 1857—Expositions of the new ideal by Sir Asutosh and Lord Curzon—The main results of the Act—The breakdown of the University system under a strain caused by the development following the policy of 1882—Character of this development ; it moved Lord Curzon to appoint his Commission—Influences of British academic thought on Indian education—Effects of the Commission's recommendation on secondary and collegiate education and on University organization—The unrevised University system fails to expand and meet the new requirements of the change of the old order into the new, and of the striking progress following it—The inevitable collapse of the system—Need for a new Commission with even wider powers than the Sadler Commission had.

We now come to the next landmark in the history of western education in the country, to the Indian Universities Act of 1904—and to the work of the Indian Universities Commission preceding it—which really marked a new era in Indian affairs, a dynamic change in the placid surface of Indian politics and in the uneventful course of Indian education ; indeed it was the herald of an academic revolution in the realm of higher education in the remarkable expansion of the University of Calcutta as the centre of

highest studies and researches ; it also witnessed unprecedented extensive development in the sphere of secondary education against the background of a sweeping ascendancy of an epoch-making national movement.

But the Act did not aim at a thorough reconstruction and radical reform of the entire system of education, secondary and higher ; there was no other way from, no other remedy for, the disastrous countrywide evils eating into the vitals of the academic and intellectual life of the country, and frustrating its educational efforts and purpose—specially in the ever-expanding and important sphere of secondary education. Unhappily for India, and for the cause of ordered and well planned progress and reform—which the British ruling classes are never tired of extolling in the political sphere—the ensuing years of this period of educational development were marked by intense and unprecedented political turmoil and unrest following in the wake of the Partition of Bengal. The whole country had accepted this sinister challenge of the reactionary elements in the British bureaucracy—then in the zenith of its power and prestige—and answered it with a sweeping, soul stirring, dynamic movement of nationalism which shook the foundation, and almost demolished the moral and psychological basis, of British imperialism in India and began a new epoch in Indian politics and Indo-British relationship. It was hardly the time for educational reform of a radical character which called for the highest constructive statesmanship from the Government and coolest thinking from the public ; but politics absorbed all public attention and swayed the minds of the intelligentsia ; and to this day it is politics—rather political matters—which dominate the public mind, the press and the platform ; and educational, economic and social questions of great importance to the nation do not get a hearing on their merits. As an eminent countryman of ours observed, “. . . All the

energy is being devoted to politics''.\* It is perhaps a price for the bureaucratic foreign rule, out of harmony with the spirit, out of touch with the needs, of the country that politics becomes a constant obsession with, and attracts all the attention of, the classes and masses. Probably because she is acutely self-conscious and sensitive, political agitation and activities in Bengal, whatever their actual necessities, have been exercising too powerful a fascination upon increasing numbers of her people. In consequence, even those who profess to lead are carried away by political slogans and the people lose the proper perspective and are swept off their feet by such false doctrines as 'Education can wait but Freedom cannot'.

But things were not so always ; and we cannot resume the thread of our narrative of the progress of western education in Bengal, without pausing to pay our tribute to the leaders of the epoch-making massive, national movement—the Swadeshi Movement of 1906 ; pitted as they were against the most powerful and well-organised bureaucracy in the world, they had the constructive ability and enlightened vision to plan the re-ordering of the society and community on the foundation of a new, dynamic, patriotic culture, a broad-based educational progress on national lines, and an educational programme not confined to unfruitful and narrow academic courses but purported to meet the growing requirements of the present and the needs of the future. If the educational side of this creative national movement which shook Indian life and society to their very roots and touched their innermost depths and under the impact of which the mighty Moguls of Whitehall were lashed into a realization of

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\*These words came casually from Sir N. N. Sircar in 1934 and are only too true. They might be contrasted with the famous words of the late Sir A. Chaudhuri—'A subject nation has no politics'—another of whose pithy remark we quoted in page 15.



the futility of their vigorous imperial policy in India were developed, if the movement of national education as planned by its leaders of the 1906 epoch—some of whom came to be among the greatest intellectual and spiritual figures of the day—were allowed to run its natural course, a brilliant cultural fruition, a powerful and synthetic growth of our national life—in its intellectual, and practical and scientific, side—would have resulted. But the enraged and out-balanced bureaucracy, true to their tradition all the world over, exhausted their whole armory to crush the struggling national movement which was born on the sacred soil of Bengal and was immortalized by the soul-stirring strains from the glorious lyres of Dwijendralal and Rabindranath. Here again the Fates intervened ; between the two fires of the usual repressive policy of the bureaucracy and the unnatural political obsession of the people, the movement of national education was left to languish by the wayside ; but the leaders and workers of the movement did not consecrate their lives in vain ; the spirit they breathed, the ideas and the principles they lived and died for, the forces of progress they harnessed to their cause cannot die ; even before the decay of the movement, the flames they lighted illumined our national and academic life and the torch they held aloft was taken up in the firm grasp of Bengal's greatest reformer in the realm of education who, inspired by their spirit, installed our national culture and heritage, our history and literature, our religion and philosophy, in their places of honour in the official University which thus became completely national in character and outlook ; if we of the present generation are privileged to impart to our children an education and culture which are practically national, we have to remember our debt to those pioneering, ardent spirits who had planned the national movement in education and culture in the Swadeshi epoch. Most of the institutions of this period

which were founded to spread national education as against the then denationalized official education could not, did not, work long. But we can point to some of these of which all India is legitimately proud—the College of Engineering at Jadabpur, the Carmichael Medical College and the Bishwarati, Dr. Tagore's University at Bolepur which is to-day reviving the glories of Nalanda and Taskhasila ; as a meeting ground of world's scholarship and culture it works to bring forth a new synthesis in world-culture, to uplift civilization—specially its aggressive, egoistic and suicidal materialism—to a higher plane of being, immune from its baser calls and inevitable conflicts. So the birth of the national educational movement did not come a moment too soon ; the country-wide educational development, though through the erratic and stereotyped channels, the rapid diffusion of the principles of nationalism and ideas of national progress and freedom so eloquently championed by Gladstone and Bright and Mazzini in Europe had prepared the ground for this national movement in Bengal, which, of all provinces in India, could absorb and assimilate the progressive ideals and thought wherever they might have emerged. The remarkable rise of Bengali literature from a mere handmaid of Sanskrit into its present prominent position in the world-literature, was immediately due to the unique achievements of Rabindranath which came to a dazzled, wondering and war-weary world as a new revelation opening out illimitable vistas of spiritual grandeur and glory ; but it has to be traced to the deathless and dynamic spirit of nationalism which, in the inimitable words of Sir S. Radhakrishnan, “ . . . brings out the full meaning of life, leaves us throbbing with wild hopes and dazzled by new vistas, . . . devastates us . . . shakes, exhausts, cleanses us . . . ” and which first ennobled and enlivened and immortalized the writings of Bankim Chandra and Michael Madhusudan in

the eighties of the last century. It was in this atmosphere surcharged with the restless and dauntless spirit of nationalism struggling for expression and outlets that the retrograde policy of British Imperialism was launched—the immediate tangible application of which resulted in the enactment of the Indian Universities Act and the Partition of Bengal ; but the indomitable spirit of nationalism and patriotism which, receiving a powerful impetus through the ascendancy of the forces of freedom and progress throughout the East, had captured the imagination, and ‘dazzled and devastated’ the mind, of young Bengal leaving it ‘throbbing with wild hopes’ could not be crushed by retrograde legislative and administrative measures. Thus before it came out of the legislative anvil, based on the Report of the Indian Universities Commission, the Indian Universities Bill plunged the whole country into a vortex of intense and unprecedented agitation, as it was construed to officialize the Universities, and to provide for official restriction of, and encroachment upon, the entire field of higher and secondary education in which non-official agencies had been working so long with freedom and spontaneity. The measure was condemned through the length and breadth of India and Bengal, naturally, took the lead in the country-wide crusade against the official measure. As Sir Surendra Nath wrote in his famous autobiography—‘The Nation in Making’— ‘. . . The Report (of the Indian Education Commission) was felt as a menace to the whole system of higher education in India . . . It revised the policy of Indian Education Commission of 1882. . . .’

Ever since the work of the Education Commission of 1882, the continued progress of western education, though rather ‘extensive’ and uncontrolled and erratic, was a characteristic feature of Bengal’s contemporary history ; the new Act did not involve any fundamental break with the

past—except probably in the matter of control of collegiate education and the expansion of the University organizations which its assumption of teaching functions as a centre of highest studies and researches necessitated. Even in the matter of organizations of the various departments of teaching and researches wherein for the first time in the Indian Universities intellectual work of the highest kind was sought to be taken up, it is important to bear in mind that the new Act, the Indian Universities Act, did not supersede, but supplemented, the older Act, the Act of Incorporation ; the new Act, undoubtedly, enlarged the scope of the work, and heightened the ideal, of the University but did not aim at any thorough reconstruction of the University, of the University system, much less of the entire system of education, higher as well as secondary ; it held that “the University shall be and shall be deemed to have been incorporated for the purpose, among others, of making provisions for the instruction of students with power to appoint University Professors and Lecturers, to hold and manage educational endowments, to erect, equip and maintain University Libraries, Laboratories and Museums . . . . to do all acts . . . . which tend to the promotion of study and research.” (Act VIII of 1904, Sec. 3).

But the Act of Incorporation merely purported “. . . to establish a University in Calcutta, for the purpose of ascertaining, by means of examination, the persons who have acquired proficiency in different branches of Literature, Science and Art and of rewarding them with Academical Degrees as evidence of their respective attainments . . . .” The universities of India, thus, had practically no higher function than those of ‘knowledge-testing and knowledge-rewarding’ ; nor did they profess to work up to any higher ideal ; so it was natural for Lord Curzon to characterise them as ‘examining and degree-giving’ bodies. We are not directly

concerned in the progress of higher education under the auspices, and in the development, of the University as a flourishing centre of highest studies and researches since, and under, the Act of 1904 ; but so fundamental was the change in the conception of the functions and ideals of the universities, as the direct result of the Act, that we must not leave it without a passing reference ; after all, the functions and ideals of the University which, from its dominating position in the whole system of education, effectively moulds the structure, and shapes the course, of secondary education—and which in any future scheme of reconstruction and reform will not fail to leave its impress on the character and process of secondary education—cannot but make their influence felt in this sphere under all circumstances. We are grateful to Sir Asutosh for a lucid exposition of the newer ideals and functions of the University under the Act of 1904. “The fundamental conception”, Sir Asutosh pointed out in 1908, “that lay at the root of the Act of Incorporation was that the University was to be a purely examining body. Nearly half a century later we come to realize that the object of the University is something wider and nobler than the mere application of the test—to determine the extent and accuracy of knowledge. . . . The present conception of the function of the University is that it is an institution for the acquisition, conservation, refinement and distribution of knowledge. . . . Another fundamental idea is . . . the recognition of the claims of research in every system of advanced education”. In the words of Lord Curzon, “. . . It (the ideal university) ought to be a place where all knowledge is taught by the best teachers to all who seek to acquire it, where all knowledge so taught is turned to good purpose . . . and where its boundaries are receiving constant expansion . . . there is no scientific frontier to the domain of knowledge. . .”

But the Indian public opinion was not reconciled to the Act for merely enlarging the conception of the ideal and functions of the Universities in India ; nor was the universal popular opposition and apprehension unfounded ; both the leaders and the public had every reason to oppose the measure as it placed the Universities, officialized as they all along had been, 'under the unduly rigid control of the Government'—a Government which was traditionally reactionary and hostile to the higher aspirations and yearnings of the people. The Sadler Commission rightly said, ". . . Perhaps the main result of the Act was to make the control and the supervision of the Government over the university policy more direct and effective than it had hitherto been . . . in short, almost every detail of university policy was made subject to its (Government's) supervision . . . . The universities of India are, under the terms of the Act of 1902 (1904?), in theory, though not in practice, among the most completely governmental universities in the world . . . ."

But long before the Act was placed on the Statute Book and after the labours of the Hunter Commission of 1882, the entire system of education had practically reached a breaking point under the tremendous strain imposed upon it by the 'remarkable development' indicated by the ever increasing numbers of the institutions and of the students flocking thereto, as a result of the great intellectual and cultural movement spreading all over the country. But since 1882, in the words of the Sadler Commission, "extraordinarily rapid development both of high schools and of colleges . . . imposed upon the university system, unrevised since 1857, a very severe test ; and in the judgment of the most competent observers, it broke down under the strain". And there was nothing to be surprised at. The universities founded as they were under the exigencies of the situation in the fifties of

the last century, cannot be expected to have the necessary care and thought bestowed upon their constitution and composition ; in the 'supreme body' of the universities, in the Senate, members were appointed by the Government for life, 'not on the ground of their capacity for, or interest in, academic work' but for 'honorific reasons' ; it was quite natural for 'many busy officials' and 'many ambitious pleaders' to find a place on this 'large and varied body' ; and the teachers got in there or on its executive body, the Syndicate, only as a matter of accident ; the Faculties and Boards of studies were formed by the Senate 'from among their own number', many of whom, as is to be expected, 'had no special knowledge of the subjects they had to deal with'. The natural result of thrusting upon 'this large and varied body', handicapped as it was with its unsatisfactory constitution and organization, the onerous responsibility of the proper supervision of the hundreds of schools and of the colleges—which were steadily multiplying—can only be the further deterioration of the system which had long been breaking down. On the one hand, numbers of 'inefficient venture schools, badly staffed and often most unhealthily housed, yet officially recognised by the University,' began to spring up ; on the other, the 'collegiate system' fell into disorder, in the absence of a directing and controlling authority, and a sound and well planned policy. Before the period under review, the inefficient organization of, or the unsatisfactory supervision by, the University, or even the increasing impotence of the Department of Public Instruction did not matter so much ; for one thing the institutions were of 'manageable size' and the number of their students was also not unmanageable ; in most cases, the colleges were either Government or missionary institutions and were usually well-equipped and well-run. But as a natural result of the policy of 1882, sprang up numerous "unendowed

colleges, depending upon the fees of students and therefore, tempted to admit all comers without limit or enquiry ; and at the same time, the Commission of 1832 had not suggested, and indeed, had no powers to suggest, any means of strengthening the control of the University over the colleges. In fact university control had become less instead of more efficient . . . . . It was widely believed that the standards of examinations of the University had shown a steady decline . . . . . the enormous numbers of ill-trained candidates from the schools and from the colleges made this conclusion appear probable . . . . In any case, it was difficult for examinations on so gigantic a scale as those of Calcutta now were, to be efficiently conducted''. But even though the Sadler Commission was disposed, thus, to share the view-point that the standards of university examination suffered a definite decline, there was, however, another high authority in Dr. Thomas Raleigh, who was of a different opinion and who in the course of a Convocation Address in Calcutta said in effect that the standard of Calcutta examination was not unduly low, as compared with those at Oxford (and other British universities). So leaving aside the debatable question of the decline of the standard of university examination, there was no doubt that the disorganization of the collegiate system was serious enough like the school system. Without 'adequate consideration of its staff, equipment and general fitness to undertake the training of young men' a college could get itself 'affiliated'. "No clearly defined standards were imposed either in regard to staff or to equipment. Some colleges were profit-making enterprises ; and the temptation to the proprietor to starve at once his teachers and students were dangerously strong. No requirements were made as to the proper supervision of students' residence ; and the evils which had grown up as a result of the flocking of students to Calcutta



threatened alarming consequences to the moral and social life of Bengal. . . ."

These and other glaring evils which were corroding the academic life and vitiating the working of the whole system of education in the country from decade to decade—in spite of the Education Commission of 1882—greatly strengthened the case for another Commission. Besides, a university man of high standing, a comparatively young man of driving and forceful personality was at the head of the Government in India—Lord Curzon. A man of his temperament and nature could not look on complacently while a vital and considerable part of the administrative system he had been presiding over was crumbling down ; such a deplorable state of things was hardly conducive to his reputation and flattering to his legitimate pride ; indeed his Convocation addresses, apart from the unfortunate controversy they had not unnaturally raised, revealed the inner academic man in him and brought into relief his loyalty to the newer university ideals and principles. During this period, too, basic ideas and principles of university organization were receiving good deal of serious attention in academic circles in England ; and the University of London—which supplied the model of Indian universities—was 'in the throes of reconstruction'. Thus the Indian Universities Commission—which was appointed by Lord Curzon's Government—with the well-known Dr. Thomas Raleigh as President and the respected Dr. (afterwards, Sir) Goorudas Bannerjee as one of the Members—did not begin their labours a day too soon ; only, as we have already said, their terms of reference were not wide enough for them to deal with the problem of educational development and organization as a whole. The Sadler Commission traces the influences of four essential features of academic reconstruction in London on 'Indian discussion' ; in the first place is the principle that

a university ought to be a teaching university ; secondly, no college should be accorded 'full privileges unless it was thoroughly well-staffed and equipped' ; thirdly, 'teachers must be intimately associated with the government of the University' ; lastly, 'the supreme governing body of the . . . University ought not to be too large'. But as the Sadler Commission remarks, it was a merest irony of fate that Lord Curzon's Commission completed their Report a year before the abandonment of the affiliating basis of university organization in London, which was in 1902, as in 1857, 'the latest word of educational statesmanship'. In the circumstances, it did not occur to the Commission to inquire into the possibility of ultimate replacement 'of the affiliating system by some other mode of organization' or 'to suggest means' of a gradual transition to 'a new system' ; rather it took for granted 'the permanent validity' of the present system and 'set itself only to improve and strengthen it' ; hence, as we previously said, both the Report and the Act based upon it did not make any attempt at 'any fundamental reconstruction of the University system but at a rehabilitation and strengthening of the existing system', even if 'it was unable to deal with the problem as a whole', in view of its narrow terms of reference. The recommendations of the Commission—into the details of which we need not enter now—were naturally based upon the basic principles of university re-organization which we have just referred to and which were now accepted principles in England ; it also recommended 'a much closer attention to the conditions under which the students live and work' and 'substantial changes in curricula and in the methods of examination' ; in the case of colleges, stricter and more systematic supervision and 'more exacting conditions of affiliation' were recommended ; as to the important question of second grade colleges, it recommended their practical

abolition. "Those second-grade colleges", they wrote, "which cannot hope to rise to the first-grade ought, we think, to revert to the position of high schools." "In the matter of regulation of schools" the Act of 1904 aimed at bringing about "a greater harmony between the University and the Department of Public Instruction" ; accordingly, it proposed that four Directors of Public Instruction would be on the Senate, and the Bengal Director, on the Syndicate of the Calcutta University. As the Universities had no proper 'machinery for ascertaining the conditions of schools, and at Calcutta the Syndicate has insisted on recognising new venture schools without due regard to the interests of sound education and discipline', the Commissioners proposed that the University would recognise only those schools which were 'recognised by the Department of Public Instruction'. But this plan could not be worked in Bengal, as a large number of schools were under private management, 'never even submitting to inspection' ; hence some sort of a 'compromise' was introduced here ; detailed regulations were framed as to the numerous 'conditions which a school must fulfil before receiving recognition'. . . . The Government Inspectors of Schools were to report to the Syndicate on these points, through 'the Director, now an ex-officio Member of the Syndicate', which it 'should usually accept as sufficient', though reserving to itself 'the final power of decision'. The working of these elaborate regulations in respect of the stringent conditions not only of recognitions of schools on the report of the inspecting officers of the Government submitted through the Director, but also of affiliation of colleges, imposed onerous responsibilities on the University—on its executive—which involved 'a much more strict and systematic supervision and much closer attention to the conditions of students' life and work ; besides, the assumption of teaching functions by, and

foundation of various Chairs in, the University of Calcutta—with which we are immediately concerned—as forming, by far, the most prominent, if not the most active and efficient, part of the system of education in Bengal necessitated considerable ‘reorganization of university government and substantial changes in the curricula, and in the methods of examination’ ; all these marked the changing of the old order and the transition to the new, the transformation of the ‘degree-giving’, examining body into what became one of the most famous centres of learning and researches in the world ; we might add, all these were accomplished under the framework of the new Act, no doubt, but without the requisite co-operation or help from official quarters. And the rise of the University into its higher plane of activities and expansion, into its position of eminence as a renowned intellectual centre and into its place of predominance in the vast field of secondary and higher education in Bengal—in short, the steady conversion of the University from a mere officialized, examining body into a ‘national institution’, into a powerful popular forum and a great factor in the national movement was possible only under the dynamic personality of an intellectual giant of rare constructive genius ; all these could be accomplished because it had at the helm of affairs a practical statesman who was gifted with the vision of a prophet and burning with the zeal and urge of a patriot.

Our reference to the changes necessitated by, and introduced under, the Act of 1904 brings our brief survey of the progress of western education under the auspices of the British rulers in India to its latest phase. This phase of the progress and the working of the system during recent years received particular attention at the hands of Dr. Sadler and his colleagues. As the years rolled by, and the deterioration of the system was not effectively arrested, the country-wide evils resulting from its diseased working immensely

strengthened the case of a Commission like Dr. Sadler's with even wider powers and broader terms of reference. With the steady rise not only in the number of the institutions—specially in the secondary stage—but also in the number of students studying therein, an enormous burden of work varied and complicated, onerous and difficult developed upon the University ; the Senate, though reconstituted to some extent, used to meet periodically to discuss and deliberate upon questions of policy and give its confirmation to the decision of its executive body, the Syndicate, as it does now ; thus it tended more and more to be a deliberative body ; and the Syndicate which has to carry on the day-to-day work of the University, came to be rather 'accidental' in its composition even under the revised constitution, in which teachers, not as such, but those who happened to be in the Senate, might form nearly or 'an actual majority' ; thus the only persons, competent by virtue of their position and experience to guide aright the policy and the activities of the University—specially in the important matters of curriculum, examination, discipline as well as in those of school recognition and college affiliation—the overwhelming body of teachers who were not only associated with, but in many cases, directed, the life and activities of the schools and colleges throughout the country, were, as a body and as such, excluded from the governance of the University ; both the Senate and the Syndicate came to be composed of busy professional and public men. But as long as there was at the helm of affairs a towering and versatile personality capable of incessant work and calm deliberation, quickness of decision and long vision, of singular intellectual vigour and thinking power but able, at the same time, to take infinite pains over the details of day-to-day affairs, the university system worked. But there was bound to be a breakdown in the long run. The Senate

and the Syndicate meet periodically, more often than not, far away from, and out of touch with, the institutions, which actually work for its cause of 'advancement of learning' ; how could the University functioning through the Senate and the Syndicate, without adequate funds and machinery, do justice to its powers of control and supervision or deal with the multifarious matters in these institutions in their minutest details, and help in the smooth and fruitful working of the whole system, over which it came to have a dominating influence all the time? It is an impossible position for a big University to be placed in.

There was, no doubt, some improvement in the matter of recognition by the University of the schools, many of which were run on a profiteering basis ; but as the Sadler Commission said, "it (the system) has not worked, and it could not work, with perfect smoothness ; if for no other reason, because the Syndicate was not a body specially qualified for such work, since it was only by accident that it could include any members experienced in school conditions ; and also because the relations between the Syndicate and the staff of the Department, who were called upon to do its work, but were not its servants, could not but be delicate." As regards the collegiate system and organization, substantial improvement was effected by means of stricter provisions for supervision by the University and stricter conditions of affiliation which in a way did away with the 'profit-making proprietary colleges' ; there was yet room for good deal of improvement ; as the Sadler Commission held . . . "Nevertheless, there remained much need for further improvement ; and the system, outlined by the (1902) Commission and in the Act (of 1904), suggested no solution for some of the difficulties." No means had been discovered for ensuring to the teachers adequate salaries and a reasonable security of tenure without which

it is impossible to expect work of high quality'. . . . Above . . . all the colleges were still left . . . as entirely distinct units, each responsible for the whole of the teaching received by its student ; each . . . a university *in petto*."

Nor could the University, 'in spite of its increased powers', guarantee or ensure to the students of any particular college, the requisite teaching—teaching 'of adequate quality' ; if the teaching of a particular subject is bad in a particular college owing to "an unsatisfactory appointment to the staff, the University's powers of disaffiliation in that subject could not be exercised for the simple reason that by so exercising its corrective powers, the entire body of the students of that college would be 'excluded from practically all examinations'. As the Sadler Commission rightly points out, . . . "so long as the college paid the whole salaries of its staff, and provided the whole teaching of its students, adequate control of teaching by the University was out of the question. At the same time, the attempt to make this control a reality involved, in some cases, an undue amount of interference with the freedom of the colleges." Many "strict rules such as the new regulations imposed . . . were intended, of course, as a safeguard against insufficient provision of instruction, but they needlessly, and sometimes, mischievously, tied the hands of better colleges, in dealing with the individual needs of their students." We have already touched, in brief, upon 'the remarkable expansion of post-graduate teaching under the direct auspices of the University' under the provisions of the 1904 Act, which 'entailed the creation of a large university staff' ; this, again, cannot but weaken the colleges feeding the University, as in effect, it drew all the available teaching resources of a high order, and attracted almost all the intellectual powers and personal forces released for the noble profession of teaching, towards the University ; nor was the effect of the

'artificial' distinction between what was regarded as 'higher' work undertaken by the University and that which was looked upon as 'lower' because it was taken up by the colleges and led to the 'higher' post-graduate courses, in any way conducive to the harmonious working of the system of higher education. Regard being had to these facts, . . . "it cannot be denied," as the Sadler Commission opined, "that the whole process of reconstruction begun in 1904 was in several respects open to criticism. . . . An effective synthesis between college and university was still undiscovered when the reforms of 1904 had been worked to their conclusion"; and the appalling waste of nation's intellectual, physical and material resources in the vital sphere of secondary education under the existing tottering top heavy system which had practically broken down under the tremendous strain of enormous expansion and ramifications was not checked—as it could not be checked, without radical transformation of, and drastic changes in, the whole system; the enormity of the waste is, moreover, not to be measured by figures; as Prof. Rushbrook Williams rightly stressed in the "India in 1920," even in the most advanced countries in the world, very 'considerable portions' of the citizens cannot go above the secondary course in their academic career; and in India, in Bengal, by far the largest numbers from the literate, and the cultivating, classes can at best hope to get the benefit of a training in the secondary schools only—and no more; thus it comes to this that practically the whole portions of the population who are taking to education and are able to go in for a course in the secondary education only, are cheated of the fruits of their labours and sacrifice owing to the serious defects in the system; and when we consider that almost the whole of nation's future assets in the young pursue elaborate but aimless and unfruitful courses of study—



unrelated to the realities of modern life, and unsuited to the complex and varied requirements of the age and the country, the problems in the field of our education become colossal in magnitude and supreme in importance ; the proper direction of our educational policy on sound national lines, the re-orientation of this policy in the light of newer ideals and aims in education and the reconstruction of the entire system which it will necessitate are problems which have to-day assumed dangerous proportions and cry for immediate solution ; without the re-shaping of the educational policy and without the necessary radical reformation, the educational progress will continue to fail to fulfil the mission which it has accomplished in the West and which it had accomplished in the good old days in the India of yore, the mission of uplifting the people on to a higher plane of thought and life. But the problems, even on the administrative side, seem to be baffling. As the Sadler Commission said, “ . . . The problem of controlling so large a mass of students and providing them with the kind of teaching they needed was as difficult as ever, in spite of improvements made since 1904. . . . And the time had certainly come for exploring the problem once more and for considering whether changes even more fundamental than those suggested in 1902 had not become necessary. . . ” It was in these circumstances that Dr. Michael Sadler and his distinguished colleagues began their work of ‘exploring the problem once more’ ; nor did they begin their labours a day too soon, specially as the ‘problem as a whole’ had not ever been explored, notwithstanding the disastrous consequences of our continued failure to face and solve it.



**PART III**  
**RECONSTRUCTION OF**  
**SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**  
**SADLER COMMISSION'S REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



## CHAPTER IX

### GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE IN EDUCATION

The predominance of non-official agencies in the field of secondary education as a historical process must be taken cognizance of by the earnest reformer—'Problem of right relation between the State and private enterprise'—Part played by the State and the public before 1854—The Wood Despatch clarifies the position as between the Government and non-official agencies—The relevant sections of the Despatch—Repeated declarations of Government policy in the last century—Development of educational thought in the West—Government Resolutions of 1904 and 1913—Government's principal errors—The course of educational development in England and India followed different lines and so, does not admit of any analogy—State control is inimical to educational efflorescence which requires freedom and spontaneity—Sadler Commission on the 'danger in the extension of Government control.'

The part played by private enterprise and endeavours, as distinguished from Government efforts, in the development of western education, specially of secondary education, in Bengal has assumed a peculiar significance, recently. More than one Minister in the days of diarchy was anxious to extend Government control in the system of education which the non-official agencies have built up and have been working quietly for nearly a century. But the present overzealous Ministry, emboldened by their practical irremovability, has awakened to the urgency and necessity of doing away with the internal autonomy of these local and private agencies, and with the authority and influence of the University, in the vast field of secondary education ; without caring for the 'constructive policy' or the comprehensive scheme of reforms framed by such well-known body of educationists as the

Sadler Commission to meet the demands of the problem of educational reform, it has resolved to bring the whole system under its virtual control ; in these circumstances, time has certainly come for reviewing the past policy and action of the Government—which the Ministry has replaced—and the quiet efforts and enterprise of the private individual and non-official agencies in the growth and maintenance of the system.

We have already said in the preceding chapter that the influence and power of the University over the hundreds of schools scattered all over Bengal have not always been conducive to the better working and well-being of these institutions nor fair to itself, regard being had to its statutory administrative and financial limitations ; labouring within these limitations it could be hardly expected to wield its great influence and powers of control and supervision in the best possible way so as to ensure a better academic life, a better organization and better fruition of educational efforts throughout the country. But then, as we have seen, the University was not exactly pitchforked into its position of pre-dominance all on a sudden, nor did its pre-eminence come in a day, as a matter of accident. It and the whole position of the University, the whole situation in the vast field of education was an inevitable historical growth necessitated by the prevailing circumstances and the policy of the State ; as a result of the working of these factors, the Government Department of Public Instruction was reduced to its position of unimportance and impotence, thus yielding the place of honour to the University and paving the way for the rise of the hundreds of schools all over the country, in consequence of non-official efforts and enterprise but independently of Government aid. It is, therefore, not a matter of surprise that as Governmental control over the schools, and their expenditure on the

working of the grants-in-aid system lessened, increasing numbers of the new institutions were left out of its benefit ; in pursuance of their policy the Government were naturally reluctant to found new schools ; thus the non-official agencies and the private enterprise could speedily dominate the field of secondary education ; the Sadler Commission, too, rightly recognised the importance of the part played by the latter in the phenomenal expansion of secondary education in Bengal. In the circumstances, any attempt at comprehensive reform, any scheme of re-modelling and re-ordering of the system of secondary education, or of the whole system of education in which the secondary stage is so important must take proper cognizance of the historical factors—of the policy of the Government—which have governed the progress of education (and of secondary education) in Bengal and have been practically instrumental in directing it on the lines it followed. But surely, none will dispute that a thorough reform and re-ordering of the secondary education is a problem which calls for immediate and adequate solution—a problem which ought to have been solved, and the whole system put on a satisfactory footing, even before the important constitutional reforms were introduced in the country. But as we have seen, a broader outlook, a more enlightened and courageous statesmanship and a realization of Government's responsibility and obligation in, as well as an appreciation of, the situation as it has developed from generation to generation during the greater part of a century—which are the essential prerequisites for the solution of the problem—are yet to dawn on the Government ; and they alone can undertake the colossal task and tackle the problem in its immensity. To look on any longer with a complacent equanimity or apathy, as the dangerous state of things in the field of education steadily engulf Bengal, is really suicidal ; the immense wastage

of the intellectual, physical and material resources resulting from the decay of the system is all the more deplorable as Bengal is faced to-day with economic, social and political problems of great urgency and magnitude and needs every ounce of her energy and resources for their solution. Sir M. N. Mukerji rightly observed, on a recent important occasion, giving expression as he did to the unanimous opinion in the country, . . . . "No sane man, I believe, will demand *status quo* in the vast and vital field of education, specially of secondary education, in Bengal. The system, which is more than half a century old, based upon a century-old policy, which has been condemned on all hands for decades as being long out of date and absurd, is naturally a dead weight and a misfit under the present conditions. . . ." But the very reasons which call for immediate solution and tackling of the problem in right earnest—the very urgency and magnitude of the problem as a whole or even of that part of the problem which falls in the secondary sphere—must forbid any hasty and ill-conceived and precipitate action, but demand a dispassionate and full consideration and weighing of all the relevant facts and all the important factors in this connection which have a bearing on the problem ; for this reason, a bare and rapid retrospect of the development of the western education—hence, of the secondary education—which we attempted in the last Part—will not do for the purpose of properly dealing with the Problem which is a standing challenge to the constructive statesmanship and political sagacity, academic acumen and enlightened patriotism of Bengal.

Fine educational development, specially rich efflorescence in the field of education, instinct with a new possibility and vitality, and not simply a mere quantitative and superficial expansion, can only follow, and cannot be



stimulated without, freedom and 'variety of educational influence' and 'better organization of educational efforts'. Thus the question arises as to what part the Government of a country should take in the development of education, and in shaping its character or moulding its aims and methods. The Sadler Commission rightly pointed out, "The problem of right relationship between the State and private enterprise in secondary education is probably more urgent in Bengal and England than anywhere in the world." In Bengal, moreover, the determination of this 'right relationship' is not possible without a proper appreciation of the factors governing the part played both by the Government and private and non-official efforts in the development of secondary education ; the importance and magnitude of the contribution of the private and non-official agencies towards this development duly impressed the Sadler Commission who thus rightly held . . . "a wise and acceptable settlement of this question (of right relationship between the State and private enterprise) is much to be desired, both in the interests of the community as a whole and in the interest of the University, of which the secondary schools are the foundation." We need not for our immediate purpose deal, at any length, with the part played both by the Government and non-official agencies in the diffusion of education in Bengal, before the Wood Despatch ; it would be sufficient to point out, long before 1854 the authorities in England as well as in India looked to non-official agencies—the lofty pioneering spirits in the British Missionary Societies and the daring reformers in the enlightened classes in the Hindu community—for a considerable share in the educational development and did not take upon their own broad shoulders and in their own hands its entire responsibility. The few institutions that the Government founded and maintained failed to meet the demand for western education

which grew in volume and in intensity as the enthusiasm and eagerness of the Hindus, specially in urban areas, for the new learning, for education on western methods increased. The Sadler Commission truly observed, "Missionaries and Hindu reformers between them succeeded in arousing a remarkable ferment of new ideas in the Calcutta of the thirties ; the educational revolution had begun." By virtue of the Parliamentary Act of 1813 the Governor-General was empowered to spend one lac of Rupees for "the revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." But the Court of Directors in June 1814 showed considerable diffidence in the matter of introducing, far less of imposing, the western education 'through the medium of public colleges', even though public feeling for it grew apace ; what Rammohun Roy did was to courageously give powerful expression and 'direction' to it, when he sent a memorial to Lord Amherst in 1823, 'advocating western education and expressing disappointment at its omission from the plan for the Calcutta Sanskrit College mooted in 1821', as he had the prophetic vision to see glorious vistas opening out before India through the flood-gates of western knowledge. The Committee for Public Instruction in Bengal which was set up in 1831 could hardly meet the demands for the establishment of new schools. "The action of the Government," observes the Sadler Commission, "was thus insufficient to satisfy the rapidly growing demand among the Hindus for western education. The question what attitude the Government should adopt towards schools not under its own control has arisen in a new form through the eagerness of the Hindus for instruction in English and in the knowledge of the West. The time was evidently coming when the Govern-

ment would be called upon to decide whether it should give financial aid to schools which under Indian management imparted education on western lines. . . . The funds at the disposal of Government were devoted in the main to the establishment of Government colleges for the supply of western education. But though, Muslim opinion was adverse to the new learning, the demand for English schools was greater than Government could meet by the foundation of institutions under its own control. Independent English schools grew quickly in number." Thus long before 1854 when the Government Policy was clearly formulated, the 'problem' had arisen in Bengal for the determination of "relation of Government to three distinct types of English schools ; those under Government, those conducted by missionary societies and those under private management" ; as Government had already adopted the policy of subsidising institutions for oriental learning under private management, it was only natural that it would follow a similar policy towards newer institutions for western education under non-official management ; herein lies the genesis of the policy of grants-in-aid, as also, of private enterprise in educational development in Bengal.

We have had occasion to refer more than once to the famous Despatch of 1854 as the most important document in the annals of educational progress in British India, enunciating as it did the general principles and broad lines to which this progress was expected to conform and which governed the Government policy in this vital matter for a long time. But the Despatch was also important as it clarified the Government position and the Government policy in the matter of expansion of education, and specially of secondary education, not only under Government, but also under non-official, management. It also clearly indicated and practically determined the relations between the Government

and the private and non-official agencies in the field of education, generally, and of secondary education, particularly. The very language of, not to speak of the spirit underlying, the Despatch assumes a peculiar importance in view of the prolonged and periodical controversy on the question of official control and direction in the field of education in Bengal. It is readily forgotten that the pre-dominance, if not pre-eminence, of non-official agencies in the sphere of secondary education is not an accident but has been the outcome of a well-planned State policy deliberately pursued for nearly a century—a policy which had guaranteed the hundreds of institutions under non-Government control and direction, their internal autonomy ; it is this autonomy, this freedom and variety of educational development that have been invariably sought to be snatched away, and trampled upon in practically all the attempts that had been and are being made by the Government to reform the old, worn-out system—the freedom and variety which were intended to be steadily and sedulously fostered by the Government. Nor did the authors of the Despatch or the Government embark lightly upon this policy of encouraging private agencies and stimulating private and non-official enterprise and efforts, instead of undertaking the whole burden of furthering educational progress on their own shoulders ; there were sufficient reasons for chalking out the policy that they did ; the relevant sections of the Despatch will speak for themselves: “. . . The consideration of the impossibility of Government alone doing all that must be done in order to provide adequate means for the education of the natives of India, and of the ready assistance which may be derived from efforts which have hitherto received but little encouragement from the State, has led us to the natural conclusion, that the most effectual method of providing for the wants of India in this respect will be to combine with the agency of the

Government the aid which may be derived from the exertions and liberality of the educated and wealthy natives of India and of other benevolent persons.

We have therefore resolved to adopt in India the system of grants-in-aid which has been carried out in this country with very great success ; and we confidently anticipate, by thus drawing support from local resources in addition to contribution from the State, a far more rapid progress of education than would follow a mere increase of expenditure by the Government. . . . Aid will be given to all schools which impart a good secular education, provided they are under adequate local management . . . ; and provided also that their managers consent that their schools shall be subject to Government inspection and agree to any conditions that may be laid down for the regulation of such grants. . . .

We desire to see local management under Government inspection and assisted by grants-in-aid taken advantage of wherever it is possible to do so, and that no Government colleges or schools shall be founded in future in any district where a sufficient number of institutions exists, capable with assistance from the State, of supplying the local demand for education.

We look forward to a time when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, with the gradual advance of grants-in-aid . . . . Such a system as this, placed in all its degrees under efficient inspection, . . . . would, we firmly believe, impart life and energy to education in India and lead to gradual but steady extension of its benefits to all classes of people. . . ."

Thus it was clearly the intention of the authorities that 'schools under private management' would continue to function and that Government would not stand in the way of newer ones springing up from 'private effort'. In 1864—and

again in 1866—the Secretary of State ‘re-affirmed’ the same principles and Bengal was praised for “having liberally encouraged private efforts in education”; he also expressed his “desire that the grant-in-aid rules should interfere as little as possible with the free action of those who may seek under their operation to promote the spread of education among the masses of the people. . . .” During this period of 20 years up to the time when the Indian Education Commission laboured there was rapid increase in the number of schools under private management as their establishment was ‘sedulously fostered’ by the Department of Public Instruction. “Bengal stands pre-eminent”, reported the Commission, “among the Provinces for the ease and speedy success which attended the introduction of the system of grant-in-aid. . . . Under the operation of the scheme for eliciting private effort, by far the larger proportion—in mere amount it may almost be said to be the whole—of the education of Bengal has come to be provided by the people themselves. . . .” The Government of India, we have seen, had in 1884 ‘accepted the cautious and well expressed proposal of the Commission on the subject of gradual withdrawal of Government from the charge of institutions of a high order. . . .’ Twenty years later the Government had again made their policy clear on ‘the relation between the State and private enterprise’ in the matter of educational progress ; in the course of a Resolution they stated in 1904, “From the earliest days of British rule in India private enterprise has played a great part in the promotion of both English and vernacular education, and every agency that could be induced to help in the work of imparting sound instruction has always been welcomed by the State. . . The progressive devolution of primary, secondary and collegiate education upon private enterprise, and the continuous withdrawal of Government from competition therewith . . .

as recommended by the Education Commission of 1883(?) and the advice has been generally acted upon . . . .”

It is of interest to note in this connection the movement of public opinion and educational thought in the West in the period—1904-1913—with regard to the whole question of secondary education. The popularity and progress of secondary education in the United States, in Switzerland, Scandinavia and in Germany, in which the State played the leading part, made a deep impression on the public mind in England, and public opinion there was steadily awakening to the importance, from the point of view of national advancement, of secondary education and increasing stress was being laid on the part that the State should take in contributing to its development on sound lines ; demands were growing for schools of a better class, ‘publicly managed, well-equipped and accessible at a small fee’; and the public in general, proud of ‘the older schools’, were restive about ‘the shortcomings of many of the secondary schools’. ‘Competent secondary schools’ meeting the needs of different localities and different classes ‘had come to be regarded . . . as indispensable to the nation’s economic vigour and social welfare.’ While the expenses of diffusion of secondary education of a better class were growing, the best type of private schools held their own against those maintained by public authorities and thus supplied a variety of types and freedom of growth, so essential to the vigorous development and maintenance of a high standard. The Report of the Consultative Committee in England in 1911 advocated ‘systematic inspection . . . as a necessary guarantee of progressive efficiency of secondary education’. These were, in short, what were happening in the field of secondary education in the West, when another declaration of educational policy was made by the Government of India in their Resolution dated the 21st February 1913. It

said . . . . "The policy of Government is to rely so far as possible on private enterprise in secondary education. This policy, laid down in the despatch of 1854, was restated and amplified by the Education Commission of 1882. . . . The admixture of private enterprise and State control was again emphasised in the resolution of 1904. To this policy the Government of India adhere . . . . The Government of India also desire that the grant-in-aid rules should be made more elastic so as to enable each school which is recognised as necessary and conforms to the prescribed standards of management and efficiency to obtain the special assistance which it requires to attain the fullest measure of utility. As larger grants become available and as the pay and the personnel of teaching staff are improved, it will be possible for the inspecting officer to concentrate his attention more and more upon the general quality of instruction. . . ."

Thus it will be clear beyond the faintest shadow of doubt that the Government in England—and in India—have all along encouraged and respected 'private enterprise', freedom of educational initiative and variety of educational growth which, in England specially, had been 'consistently guarded by Parliament during the whole period in which the educational system of the country has been remodelled on modern lines'; nearer home in India, to quote again from the Sadler Report, . . . "For more than sixty years the Government in India has shown its strong desire to allow variety alike of educational aims and of management, in secondary education and its belief in the value of non-Governmental initiative and enterprise in this important sphere. . . ." These were, then in short, the important historical factors in the policy of the State and the attitude of the successive Governments and administrations which were responsible for, as directly and strongly encouraging, the rapid and now overwhelming pre-ponderance of non-Government schools



imparting secondary education all over Bengal. But as we have repeatedly said and as the Sadler Commission emphasised in no uncertain words, this remarkable educational movement, reflected in the striking multiplication of the schools all over Bengal, penetrating as it has done into the remotest and most obscure corners of the country, has been following unnatural, unhealthy and unfruitful and sometimes, positively dangerous, channels ; nor did the increasing numbers of the new schools rising as they did in the wake of this great movement, keep pace with the rise in the standard of efficiency and in the level of general excellence which have in the West followed the progress of educational thought, and the growth of a healthy educational conscience and outlook. In England there had been a definite change in public opinion which veered round State support and supervision and increased State action in the diffusion of secondary education of right type, as the cost for the necessary equipments and maintenance of general level of efficiency was becoming greater than the private enterprise and management could well meet. "But the great mass of English opinion", wrote the Sadler Commission, "has been convinced by experience that secondary education according to modern standards of excellence cannot be provided or maintained in efficiency by private enterprise alone, except where there are large endowments or where much higher school fees are charged than any but well-to-do parents can afford. . . ." This change in the public feeling and public opinion in England which has almost always supplied the model for educational aims and ideas in India, cannot but be reflected in, and mould, educational thought and official mind here too ; we have to admit, as we readily do, that all these important factors have combined to effect a definite change in the Government policy and attitude towards educational progress in the country ; and it seems only natural that they

should concentrate their attention on, and apply their laudable zeal for reform in, the sphere of education which is admittedly the weakest link in the chain, where a progressive deterioration has been going on and where the greatest possible mischief has been wrought, ever since the system was thrown out of gear in the eighties of the last century, owing to the rapid multiplication of numerous schools under private management—in the sphere of secondary education. But the authorities have invariably fallen into two fundamental and very serious errors which are bound to frustrate all attempts at reform, however earnest and big. First error of theirs was their failure to take proper cognizance of the inevitable historical factors that have made for the pre-eminence and pre-ponderance of non-official agencies—to be more explicit, for Hindu influence and Hindu control and management in the vast field of secondary education. It was the State policy and the apathy of the Muslims, which had been, mainly, responsible for consolidating Hindu influence and Hindu pre-eminence in this vital sphere of national work during the greater part of a century ; and any future State policy, any big State intervention and attempt at reform must recognise this incontrovertible fact and must make proper and adequate allowance for this unalterable historical growth which has become, in the course of nearly a century of its working, engrained in the character of the system ; so that this influence and autonomy, this Hindu pre-ponderance, in the running of the large majority of the institutions have become an integral part and parcel of the educational structure, entering and interwoven into the very vitals of the body politic, if we might say so. To ignore this most powerful historical fact, to fail to recognise this predominant factor, must spell the inevitable failure of all attempts at reform. The second great error of the reformers was to give the Report and recommendations of the Sadler Commission a

wide berth, without having had the benefit of an investigation and constructive scheme by any other authoritative and expert body ; this must really be a fatal and insane course for any reformer in the realm of education to adopt. But we have all to recognise, on the other hand, that much water has flown down the Ganges and the Thames since Dr. Sadler and his eminent colleagues reported ; nor are the entire report and all the 'recommendations of Sadler Commission, or of any other body, for the matter of that, sacrosanct and infallible but have got to be taken up, and modified if necessary, in the light of further experience and development.

While, as we have said, it would be a suicidal folly, to try to maintain *status quo* in the field of education—and of secondary education—it would not be less unwise to follow blindly the trend of events and the direction of official policy in the field of education in England—and other western countries. The great and growing social problems of a vast country like India are of too great a magnitude and complexity to admit of any copy book or imitation solution but must be tackled on the spot in a generous attitude and with adequate intellectual and moral equipment and ample resources, and tackled in their gigantic setting. As the Sadler Commission remarked, secondary education was “steadily passing out of the category of private effort into the category of those public services which are supported from taxation. Such a change in the relation of secondary education to the State brings inevitably with it an increase of State control over secondary schools”. This change, however, was bound to have its repurcussion on the educational thought and policy in India, though it is clearly a case of false or mistaken analogy to compare the constitutional position and the political condition of England with those in India. It is still more unfair, if not preposterous, to justify State interference and State control in education, specially in secondary education in Bengal on the

untenable basis of this—false—analogy which does not really exist. For one thing, the State control and State action in the sphere of popular education in England are undertaken, ultimately by a Board presided over by a Minister of State, who, though a party man, is responsible to a democratic Parliament elected on a political and not communal basis. But the analogy of the British Board of Education in England cannot hold good for another very cogent reason. There are, in England, working under the national system of education, many powerful and old schools which, by virtue of their great influence and endowments and tradition, act as a makeweight against the tendency of the State to unduly interfere in, and encroach upon, their independence. As the Sadler Commission observes, “. . . In England, however, the most influential of the secondary schools are wealthy foundations which, though they do not any longer stand outside the system of public education, are virtually independent and could resist successfully any action of the Board of Education which threatened their freedom of initiative. In Bengal there are no Indian educational institutions which correspond to those great endowed schools and could maintain their independence against mistaken interference on the part of a body of officials. . . .” Here in Bengal, moreover, we have functioning in its heyday of glory the new-fangled communal democracy, ‘omnipotent but irresponsible’. It has been set up not surely for the purpose of furthering purely political progress but to appease the rising communal hunger of influential and vocal sections of a particular community, more as a time-serving but clever political dodge to thwart the surging nationalism of other progressive communities than as a generous measure of political concession conceived in a large Christian spirit. Besides, the powerful and self-reliant public opinion in England is a standing bulwork against the vagaries and

aberrations of Government, which has yet to find its effective counterpart in Bengal.

It is but natural in these unhappy and peculiar circumstances that State control and State intervention and interference in education should be exercised in favour of one community against the other ; the community in possession of the machinery of the State will certainly try its utmost to grab all the power and capture the vantage ground and usurp the position of pre-dominance in the sphere of education which have come to the other community after nearly a century of silent toil and sacrifice. But it has to be recognised that education—secondary education, more specially—is a major national concern affecting the interest, alike, of whole nation as well as of the individual, and has as its aim, the promotion of the ultimate welfare of society and unfolding of the brighter prospects in life for, and the development of higher side of human nature in, the individual. And if freedom, spontaneity, and variety of growth and development are generally the very essential factors in educational efflorescence and cultural fruition, these are really indispensable in Bengal where education and culture have thrived and where sustained progress in these spheres was achieved, without State aid and interference, and in an atmosphere of freedom and spontaneity, where the autonomy in the management, and the traditional freedom of the individual institutions have been the very lifeblood of the system. We have however to recognise at once that in the peculiar situation in Bengal, in view of the deplorable and dismal state of things in the whole sphere of education, specially of secondary education, State help on a gigantic scale is absolutely necessary, nay it is indispensable, to real and abiding progress and to the resuscitation of academic life which must precede it ; but State interference will be resented and State control in the sphere of education will not be tolerated ; the

public opinion and public feeling have got to be reckoned with ; hence it was in the fitness of things that the Sadler Commission sounded a serious note of warning against the dangerous tendency of the State to extend its control and to interfere in the historic autonomy of the numerous struggling institutions in Bengal. "But it is well therefore," wrote the Sadler Commission more than twenty years ago, "to take precautions with a view to guarding secondary education not against State supervision which is salutary but against State interference with the freedom in the schools. It is very true that by no means every school makes use of its freedom. Many, though free from State interference, are in bondage to routine and are intellectually inert. But at the heart of the matter there is an element of danger in every great extension of Government control over schools. Education is not wholly a matter of public concern. It lies across the boundary which divides public functions from private initiative. It is too important a factor in national life for the State to abrogate its responsibilities in regard to it. But at the same time it is too intimately connected with family life and with private conviction to be entrusted to Government management alone. Therefore it is desirable to seek for some new synthesis between State supervision and private effort, specially in the spheres of secondary and higher education. . . ."

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEED FOR A NEW DEPARTURE IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

A sense of the need for new departure from the traditional educational Policy dawned upon the Sadler Commission only—‘A powerful movement finds expression in’ the unceasing demand for secondary and higher education—Four causes produce it—Left to themselves, they will not make for highest fruition ; danger of misdirection—Some of the more serious needs, rehabilitation of the teaching profession with adequate number of teachers with proper training and spirit, remedy for the widespread unsuitability and inability of the Matriculates for higher courses, restoration of the living contact between the teacher and the taught in keeping with India’s glorious ideal and tradition, removal of the disastrous influences of examinations and degrees upon the student’s career, the promotion of the physical side of education, now in an appalling state, newer methods of teaching and adjustment of curriculum—Necessity of reforms ‘on a bold and generous scale’, danger of its delay—The need of a ‘new kind of education for new kinds of work’.

A sense of the necessity of a thorough reformation of the educational system did not, we have seen, dawn upon the Commissions that worked before Dr. Sadler and his colleagues ; and the British ruling classes were too much pre-occupied—specially in the last half a century—in the exacting task of maintaining the character and traditions of their benevolent despotism in India, to be really alive to the crying need of a re-orientation of the policy, and of a radical reconstruction, in the realm of education. It was left to the Sadler Commission to emphasise the need of ‘a new departure’ in educational policy and aims and to establish that nothing short of a thorough reformation of the existing, inelastic, tottering and decaying system would meet the alarming situation in the country. We have got to be

grateful to the Commission for bringing to bear upon their work a long vision and a broad understanding, which enabled them to view the problems of India in the proper setting—on the back-ground of world conditions—and to frame their constructive policy and scheme in the light of relevant facts and factors and the prevailing trends and tendencies in India and abroad. But before we can deal with their new policy and scheme, we have to examine their new approach to the problems and take cognizance of their findings on the character of these problems, and the nature of numerous evils, in the field of education, specially of the secondary education, in Bengal.

The problems which the Sadler Commission were called upon to investigate, the situation with which Bengal is confronted to-day not only in the educational sphere but, because of its repercussions, in the political and economic spheres too, have been handed down, as we said before, from the last century. But even a generation ago, they had little of the complexity and magnitude which are to-day almost baffling. 'A powerful movement', has been at work and 'finds expression' in the widespread and uninterrupted 'demand for secondary and collegiate education' which called forth the rapid rise of hundreds of institutions all over the country ; this movement is due, according to the Sadler Commission to 'four causes' ; the first of these is mainly economic pressure upon . . . 'the already narrow means of many families belonging to respectable classes in Bengal' ; the economic depression and the rising of prices have impelled these classes to seek for their sons the education which is regarded as a sort of passport to callings, 'suitable for their choice' ; both the guardians and the boys have been silently making sacrifices for this education ; and the former 'are desperately anxious that their boys should be able to get at the lowest possible cost the kind of education which will



help them to livelihood in a career consonant with their sense of dignity.' The second cause has been the rising ambitions and aspirations outside their own traditional grooves and callings, which moved many classes, quite large sections of the people that remained outside the orbit of the intellectual and academic movement and were not so much affected by its influence hitherto. The third cause is not exactly well defined or distinct ; it is a vague but powerful feeling—'an instinct'—'that India will become an industrial country, that new kinds of employment will be opening, and that it will be to a young man's advantage to have a good education.' The fourth cause has been equally strong ; the educational backwardness and illiteracy have been a standing blot on the fair name of Mother India, to whatever historical and political causes it might be due ; and it is merely thrown into bolder relief by the achievement of the small educated and intellectual minority. Any advance in the sphere of education, any quantitative, if not qualitative, expansion, or development of education is thought to be desirable, in view of, as it must, 'lessen the mass of ignorance'. This factor has given a tremendous impetus to the growth of secondary education, even though it came directly in conflict with those whose immediate interest dictated a limitation of education among their own circle so as not to add to the competition they have had to face in the struggle for existence. "Much of the zeal for secondary education," wrote Dr. Sadler and his colleagues, "springs from non-self-regarding motives and works against what might appear to be self-interest. It is this belief in education for its own sake, a belief which though often vague and indiscriminating, is ardent and sincere—that gives its chief significance to the movement now spreading in Bengal." But unfortunately for Bengal these significant factors, these salutary causes which have been giving a tremendous impetus to, and impelling, the

great movement forward, will not by themselves lead, have not led, it into fruitful channels ; nor will they, of themselves, make for its happy fruition or bring up the education and training of the young to the requisite standard or level. "On the contrary," as the Sadler Commission says, "unless they (these forces) be supported by financial assistance and directed wisely to well-chosen ends, they will bring about a collapse in an old system which was designed for more limited numbers and for earlier days. . . . At present nearly every one who goes to school or college gets something short of what he really needs." But these forces, these powerful factors, are capable of 'transforming' the educational system in Bengal, making every, school and college better than it has ever been—if only they are 'rightly directed'. It was, in the opinion of Dr. Sadler and his colleagues, 'a representative central authority commanding the confidence and support of public opinion', that can "lift the heavy mass of the present system to a higher level. . . . A wave of public opinion, supporting the action of a new representative central authority, can alone raise the present system to a new level of usefulness and open out new educational opportunities. . . . The teaching in the secondary schools should be carefully adapted to the requirements of different types of ability ; emphasising the value of an all-round development of physique, mind and character and not forgetful of the practical needs of modern life. But in order to meet the needs of the whole people, education must be organized with infinite care ; it must be developed by patient experiment, by public and private expenditure on a generous scale, and with rigorous regard for excellence in quality ; it must be adjusted and continually re-adjusted to the manifold needs of different individuals, and to the needs of the community for the service of which the individual is trained."

The most serious weakness in the system of secondary education in Bengal is the want of suitable and qualified teachers who could advance the level of learning, and serve the varied needs of the individuals and of the community in the field of education ; it is one of the deplorable legacies of the past policy of the State not to recognise education as a major national concern but to curtail expenditure and energy of the Government thereon ; the policy of practical indifference to, and indirect acquiescence in, the rise of multifarious mushroom institutions, without adequate private endowments or aid from public funds, but mainly depending upon the precarious income from realizable fee has been chiefly responsible for flooding the country—and its academic life—with unceasing streams of unqualified, ill-trained, and unresponsive teachers—the teachers who represent the overflow and refuge from other lucrative and even tolerable business and professions ; and thus they are not only misfits but are bereft of necessary enthusiasm and sympathy so essential for the successful training of the young entrusted to their charge. If there is any calling, any profession in which intellectual as well as moral and even spiritual excellence is indispensable, it is the sacred and necessary profession of teaching ; if the teacher, as happens in 9 out of 10 cases in Bengal, do not, or cannot, bring the requisite idealism and devotion to bear upon their work, how can they be expected to galvanise the young, ardent budding mind into a strong, healthy and dynamic force and baptise the youth of the country in the holy fire of a new faith and idealism, how can they infuse into them the new spirit and yearning after the great and the glorious and the beautiful, how can they open the flood-gates of knowledge and culture for them? Without the necessary equipments and without the indispensable public support and active sympathy, the overwhelming body of the struggling teachers plod their weary

way in life—a life which is unrelieved even, by any occasional advent of affluence or made bearable with a modicum of comfort, but a life weighed down, and crushed under, the heavy and constant burden of anxieties, worries and want ; in these unhappy circumstances they have practically little opportunity for further study and training. The unattractive social position, the meagre and inadequate income and a life of overwork with which a teacher is condemned makes the vicious circle, in which we move in the sphere of education, complete. “As compared with many other countries,” truly said the Sadler Commission, “Bengal is weakly furnished with the personnel indispensable to educational success. Until this defect is remedied, the hope of achieving a great success must be foiled. . . . In Bengal, the widespread faith in education is in violent contrast to the disregard of the instrument by which alone education can achieve its aim.”

On the other hand, there is in Bengal really no dearth of fine and excellent material for the noble profession of teaching. This human material is practically strewn broadcast all over Bengal, thanks to the increasing outturn of the network of schools and colleges through the length and breadth of the country. Moreover as the trade depression and economic unsettlement and unrest increase or do not show any sign of dying out, and as the world's economic recovery is as yet far off and the local or regional conditions do not, naturally, improve, avenues of employment become more and more crowded ; and keen rivalry and unrelenting competition reign supreme ; the young, ambitious products of the University, ever on the increase, find themselves well-nigh stranded. But there is the great and glorious profession of teaching waiting to be galvanised into a great social force with the influx of young and aspiring spirits, capable of absorbing the best products emanating from the

University. But as we have said, the profession has and can have no attraction for the able and young spirits ; for the simple reason that the prospect which it holds out in life is extremely chilling and poor ; as the Sadler Commission said, “. . . a great calling, indispensable to the community and not in itself derogatory to the dignity of the most highly educated men, is in urgent need of services which the well-educated men alone can render. The belief that education can give new life to Bengal grows apace. With the help of a large body of able and vigorous teachers it could meet all the hopes which are reposed in it. But these teachers are not yet forthcoming. The prospects afforded by the teaching profession are insufficiently attractive. Yet there is a multitude of promising young men who would be glad to find a calling adequately remunerated and capable of satisfying the ambitions of those of them who desire to serve their country and their generation. Is it possible to bring these two needs together and thus at one and the same time to furnish Bengal with the instrument which will realize its educational hopes and to open out for young and well-educated men attractive opportunities in a profession from which they now turn aside?”

Before formulating their definite constructive proposals, the Sadler Commission directed the searchlight of their criticism on some of the most conspicuous evils in the system, which no educationist or well-wisher of our country can acquiesce in. The unsuitability of a large number of students going in for college, that is university, courses is notorious and Dr. Sadler and his colleagues, along with all thinking persons, would first remove the evil. But the gulf between the two courses are so wide, the moral and intellectual equipments necessary for the latter courses of study are so little cared and provided for in the schools that the students in their intermediate courses fail, in most cases, to

avail themselves 'of what the University can offer' ; they cannot come up to the University standard or keep pace with the progress in the class rooms or maintain it independently. For one thing, the departure from the school, to the University, course is too fundamental and violent—to be near a natural transition or an easy and normal ascendancy from one stage in a student's career to the next higher one. Both the subject-matter as well as the courses of study—through the medium of English—are much beyond the average intermediate students of our country, notwithstanding their intelligence and ability and diligence. The inevitable result of all this is that a large body of nation's ardent and young manhood is tempted to fall back upon the dubious 'shortcuts to success' in the examinations through the back door of note and key books ; it is particularly unfortunate—as it occurs in that stage in their young career when their minds are in the most favourable and impressionable state of development, when their minds just begin to unfold, and enrich themselves, by contact with the master minds in the scientific and literary world ; at a time when the natural enthusiasm and divine curiosity of budding youth, when the innate and inextinguishable instinct and yearning of the Bengali mind for knowledge and culture, which have 'for untold centuries' distinguished it, wait to catch the golden spark of inspiration at the feet of the masters living or dead, the process of their intellectual and spiritual growth is arrested and sterilized under crushing weight of academic courses ; and they are left to sink or swim in the big institutions which aim at mass preparation for examination—however indifferent it might be—just as the big factories work on the basis of mass production ; the individual help and guidance which are essential and indispensable to a young mind when he is struggling to enter a new world

of thought or 'working his way . . . through the granite of a difficult subject' are denied them in these institutions. But what are, and ought to be, the real mission of Indian educational institutions? To invigorate and brighten their young lives, to help in the development of their intellectual powers, to lift their ideals and aims into a higher plane in keeping with the best traditions of their country must be the mission of the institutions to which their future is entrusted to be shaped and in which they are maintained at no little sacrifice, in very many cases ; but this sacred mission, this essential character-building work which has an importance all its own in the critical period we are passing through, is generally frustrated not because of the lack of intrinsic quality in the teacher or the taught but because of some disastrous evils which holds the present system in an iron grip ; in the vast majority of cases, there is no living, stimulating touch between the teacher and taught—the personal touch, the living contact which inspires, enlivens and leads and sustains, that lifts the drooping spirit, rouses the sleeping genius and awakens the dormant faculties in the student. There cannot be a greater tragedy for India—for an Indian educational institution which is verily a temple of learning from the standpoint of India's ancient culture—that the teacher and the taught should be strangers to one another at the end of the academic course ; and nothing is further from the best traditions of India's cultural and educational institutions which flourished in the days gone by as the radiating centres of her cultural and spiritual glory, "as seats of trust and power, as free fountains of living waters and as undefiled altars of Truth," because of the spontaneous co-mingling of thoughts and activities, joys and sorrows, between the teacher and the taught, nor is this tradition of mutual understanding and love peculiar to India ; in spite of the steam roller of modern

civilization with its distracting and disturbing forces, England, the nursery of advance ideas, is proud of her massive educational centres where the traditional relations, the living and redeeming contact, between the teacher and the taught, reign and work out the fullest fruition in education and culture. The atmosphere of perfect amity and serenity, in which the deepest love of the teachers for their pupils and the greatest devotion of the latter for the former acted and reacted upon one another and made for the unfolding of the intrinsic excellence in the young spirits in India had its counter-part in the West also ; only, in India and in the East, it was in this perfect atmosphere, unique in the world, that the self-realized *rishis* and the preceptors who lived and moved and had their being on a higher plane, spiritual and moral, could communicate something of their spiritual and moral calibre to their ardent pupils—still in a lower stage of development—and lead and lift them on to the higher. Even to-day when the whole world has been dragged into the mad rush, and the bustle, of ultra-modern civilization, into its whirlpool of aimless progress, this sublime atmosphere, this educational ideal and tradition, this fruitful co-mingling of lives, this communion of souls, and not simply intellectual intercourse, are not altogether dead ; there are institutions in the India of to-day, though few and far between, working quietly, and away from the glare of the public eye where this tradition of India's cultural and spiritual fruition is a living reality, where the very soul of India's spiritual culture lives in cloistered seclusion.

But if it is not possible—some might say not, desirable—to convert overnight the thousands of institutions—which have sprung up all over the country in response to the innate yearning of the people for education and culture—into so many centres of oriental learning, so many Gurukuls and Navadwips, there can be no solution of the gigantic



educational problems, no lessening of the colossal tragedy going on in the sphere of education in India, specially in Bengal, no thriving transformation of the deadening mass of the decaying system, unless we can invoke and instal in our midst, in our cultural centres and places of learning, the spirit and ideal which enlivened and brightened the temples of learning, the forest universities, the small hermitages and Ashrams of India of yore ; then only we will make it possible for the immortal spirit of India's civilization and culture to blossom forth in all the brilliance of the oriental' foliage, in all the splendour of the 'georgous East'. But unfortunately India has travelled far away from those ancient and idyllic days of academic excellence and cultural and spiritual fruition ; it is useless to sigh over, and try to bring, them back in their old atmosphere and setting. India's ancient seclusion and serenity, India's political freedom as well as freedom and spontaneity of development guaranteed to the cultural and academic centres in the ancient and medieval periods, had gone, broken into fragments ; India finds herself in the currents and cross currents of a world mad, egoistic and, materialistic to the core, bound to the chariot-heels of one of its dominating powers, under the impact of which her educational structure along with her freedom and spontaneity, crashed to the ground, unsupported as it was with the requisite material power and organization.

But even in her regrettable modern conditions, in the days of departed glory and deepest gloom, the great Renaissance Movement of the last century found no dearth of exponents and workers in the educational centres here ; if it was given to India, to Bengal more specially, to rise to the height, though not the fullest height, of her genius and herald a new epoch of literary, cultural and evangelical brilliance which dazzled the western world, it was due not

a little to the revival in the cultural centres of that fruitful ancient spirit which sanctified academic life in old days ; the movement of western education, with the magnificent cultural heritage of the West could not have made such a striking appeal to, could not have progressed in so remarkable manner in, Bengal, but for the fruitful contact, the redeeming personal touch between the teacher and the taught in the last century. It was because the teachers of this golden epoch in Bengal, European and Indian, were themselves sustained by a lofty ideal and baptised in the fire of a burning faith that they could inspire their pupils with the inspiration of a new faith and hope and nourished their genius and intellect which became the most powerful factors in the rise of the India of to-day. If Bengal is once more to revive her former, if not her ancient, glory and be true to her own greater and nobler self, she has got to find her soul in a new cultural growth and synthesis through an intense country-wide process of education ; she has got to bring back her cultural atmosphere, her freedom of development and variety and spontaneity of growth, she has got to have inspired teachers and ardent and earnest young patriots as students ; she has got to transform her soulless, inert educational institutions—which are spending themselves in, and bringing out through, a ceaseless process of dead and dreary routine-work, an increasing stream of undeveloped juvenile mass products—necessarily so many misfits—into the real centres of learning where seekers after truth collaborate to keep aflame the torch of learning and culture and truth which knows no 'scientific frontier' but is realized in the progressive elevation of humanity in the individual. But coming down to earth from what might appear, in the light of prevailing conditions, to be a dream land, one finds the whole system of education is moving in a vicious circle. The extreme and unnatural economic

pressure puts a premium upon the success in the examinations, upon the certificates and degrees of the University without which even the best of the students, the ablest and most learned of the scholars, not to speak of ordinary school-going, degree-seeking boys and youths, will fail to get the meagrest recognition or earn his living and maintain himself and his family in the keen and relentless struggle for existence raging in all its ferocity all around ; his learning, his scholarship, his education and culture will be of little avail to him against his lesser rivals armed as they might be with University degrees and, crowned with success at the examination halls ; in a country where the University degrees and success in examinations are practically the only passport to a career, the educational institutions—and the poor struggling families and parents who send their sons there with a view to qualifying them for a profession or for earning a decent living—cannot fail to concentrate their attention upon it, to the exclusion of real and abiding educational progress and learning. The secondary schools which attract, and seek to live on the small fees of, thousands of boys of struggling families, have, no other option, specially in the absence of proper and adequate provisions for their efficient and healthy working. Thus the vicious circle is complete—the resultant evil is the ever-increasing flow of undeveloped, ill-equipped, untrained young men unfit for the higher, university, courses and misfits in a merciless world, unprepared for the stern reality in life awaiting them in the relentless struggle for existence ; thus the second reason, the obvious cause of the colossal failure of the whole system of education is that practically the whole body of institutions have no other purpose, no other aim than to prepare their students for success at the coming examination by finishing, somehow or other, by hurrying through, the prescribed curriculum ; the whole energy of

the schools and colleges is spent, and utmost emphasis is laid, on the realization of this immediate object in students' life. The exalted ideal, the high motive and the faith which inspired the founders of many of these institutions are relegated to the background and the success of the students in their examinations assumes an unreal and overwhelming importance to the teachers and the taught ; and thus the broad purpose of education, the essential object in the students' career—the development of his mental and physical powers, and the elevation of his young spirit, the unfolding of the immense and inexhaustible potentialities of the bright side of human nature and real preparation of the young not only for careers but for the battle of life through the inevitable process of discipline, knowledge and culture—is frustrated.

“The schools,” writes the Sadler Commission, “specialise in preparing the boys for the university matriculation. It is easy to excuse them when we remember what public opinion insists upon their doing, and how careful most of them have to be in keeping public opinion their friend. But the college authorities find no reason to be satisfied with the average result. On the contrary, they say that the intake from the schools is of such poor quality that little can be made of it without a long preliminary drill. It is not that the material is bad but that it has been mishandled in the schools. This in itself would be serious enough, but the mischief does not stop here. The high school training which fails to fit most of the boys for the University, fails also in fitting them for anything else. Preoccupied with the matriculation, the schools neglect the rest of their business. . . .”

We have not confined ourselves to the working of the secondary schools, but have brought within our purview the collegiate stage, at any rate, its intermediate stage,

because the Sadler Commission, acting up to the sound principle accepted in the educational and academic world in the West, had included the intermediary course in the secondary stage as an integral part of their whole scheme which they formulated to remove and remedy the multifarious evils vitiating the working of entire educational system ; we shall discuss their solution of the gigantic problem of reformation of the moribund system as we proceed. "Obsession by the idea of passing examinations is another glaring defect in the existing system of university education. A degree has such value as a qualification for appointment to a post in Government service that, under the pressure of their poverty, the great majority of the students forget the wider purposes of university training and concentrate their thoughts upon the certificates which it confers. No one who tries to put himself into the position of a struggling Indian student, and to realize what he himself would probably do under like conditions, can wonder at the dominating place which examinations take in the students' outlook or at the anxiety with which he looks forward to them. They are the touch-stone of the young man's career. His prospects in life depend on them. And he knows what sacrifices his parents have made in order that he may win a degree. But, though the excessive importance which is now attached to the results of the university examinations, is natural enough, the effects of it upon the spirit and tone of university life and studies are lamentable. University education in Bengal (and similar complaints come from other parts of India) is largely vitiated by this narrowness of aim. . . ." This is but the one side of the picture—the baneful effects of some of the most conspicuous evils as they affect a part of our academic life, as they mar, instead of helping in, the intellectual, and the moral, development of the nation's young manhood and

womanhood. But there is another side of the picture, another side of our academic life which is not less, but probably, more important, than the intellectual, which suffers, owing to continued neglect at the hands of guardians and authorities, and results in more serious loss to the nation—a loss which has assumed alarming proportions as the years roll by and threatens to-day to spell disaster to the nation. The continued neglect of the physical side of our education has to-day brought about enormous loss of virility and vitality and is tending to bring forth a race of invertebrates and physical wrecks who are absolutely unfit for the hard, relentless and ceaseless struggle for existence and are dragged to a premature grave in the prime of life multiplying widowhood and orphanhood and leading to untold intensification and increase of poverty—which, again, is a stumbling block to the proper prosecution of one's studies, and is a serious obstacle to educational, and national, progress. This grinding poverty of the majority of the guardians, the apathy of the well-to-do and wealthy sections of the people and the callousness and indifference of the custodians of the public funds have aggravated the appalling conditions of students' life in Bengal, which, today, threatens to destroy not only his intellectual, but also his physical, and aesthetic, possibilities and potentialities. The God-given buoyancy of childhood, the simple joys of boyhood and girlhood, the healthy and many-sided interest and curiosity of juvenile nature, the exuberance of energy and enthusiasm and the emotional and aesthetic abandon, which characterise the young all over the world and specially characterised the young and ardent mind of preceding generations in Bengal, seem to have departed from our land; so that Sir Michael Sadler was constrained to make a pathetic but significant remark to the effect that he had not seen a Bengalee student, to smile heartily. All the elaborate schemes

for the reformation of the system of education in Bengal will not be worth the paper they are written on, unless there are adequate provisions, unless proper and speedy steps are taken, for the entire re-ordering of the students' life and for the reconstruction of academic conditions so as to bring back the natural buoyancy, the virility, the enthusiasm and the ardour, and, in short, the sun-shine which has departed from our educational institutions and the surroundings of our students' life and career. As the Sadler Commission observes, ". . . the physical side of our education receives too little attention both in colleges and schools. The health of the students is unduly neglected. Facilities for games and physical training are inadequate. Great numbers of the college students and school boys live in unsuitable houses where the conditions are very unfavourable to health. Secondary and higher education in Bengal would be a much greater boon to the community if improvements were made in those conditions of student life." Since Dr. Sadler and his colleagues reported, these conditions have been steadily deteriorating—the result has now assumed an appalling magnitude. The Government of Bengal have now a Physical Director, besides, the traditional Director of Public Instruction and Director of Public Health. But the reports of the medical examinations and investigation undertaken by the Students' Welfare Committee of the University have made staggering disclosures as regards the general physical conditions and health of the students receiving instruction at the numerous public institutions. About 75% of these students suffer from some physical defect or other, majority of them, from malnutrition and from want of proper diet and the proportion of serious ailments are also alarming. The dangerous and deplorable conditions revealed in these reports, which are, only typical but not exhaustive, have no parallel in any country in the

West or probably in the whole world, which calls itself civilized. But as we have said, a sense of reality, a realization of this nation-wide tragedy, in a word, an educational conscience has yet to dawn on the public mind and on the Government. We might recall, in this connection, Sir John Anderson appointed a strong Committee, generally known as the Youth Welfare Committee, ostensibly to investigate—and suggest measures for improvement of—the conditions under which the juvenile population live in Bengal. But his successors and their Governments have practically sat over the important question of the welfare of the country's youth. No Government—which pretends to be progressive—can afford to be without an active constructive policy towards the vital question of healthy development of the students'—and other young person's—mind and body.

Apart from these grave defects and glaring evils which are inherent in, or follow directly from, the working of this decaying system, there is a serious need to adjust and readjust the subject-matter of the studies and the curricula ; the courses of studies and the curricula which exercised so tremendous a fascination over the older generations of students, and opened to them the flood-gates of a new heaven, inspired them with a new faith and a new ideal, no longer have the same attraction or influence over their present day successors ; no longer do they 'bring the revelation of a new world of thought and criticism' to them. Nor is 'the need for a great reform in the methods of teaching both in schools and colleges' less serious, rather 'more fundamental.' On the western countries, proper training of the teachers in the main principles of education and in the 'art of teaching a class' has conferred an inestimable boon, changing as it has done the very 'character of the educational system' there. "It is," stated the Sadler Commission, "capable of rendering the same service to Bengal,



provided that the prospects of the teaching profession are so improved as to attract a larger number of men of ability into this career." All these point to the immediate necessity of a thorough re-orientation of the policy and aim pursued in the sphere of education—to the necessity of a new outlook, of newer ideals and newer courses of study, more intimately related to needs of the age and to the realities of the newer and more complicated situation in the country. Truly did the Sadler Commission write, "by imperceptible degrees and from causes which have lain beyond the control of the universities, the older course of studies has lost much of its savour. And when we remember the extraordinary rapid increase in the number of college students—an increase which has resulted in its being the lot of the majority to be herded in large classes, to be treated as a crowd and to be passed on from one stage of instruction to the next almost like materials through a machine—and that an ever increasing portion of the students come from poverty-stricken homes and many of them from families which have no long tradition of higher education, we can hardly wonder at the exaggerated importance which it has become the custom to attach to success in passing examinations. . . . It is clear that the way in which the universities have been used for the purpose of recruiting State services has had a demoralizing effect. . . ." If we have pointed out along with the Sadler Commission, some of the plague-spots in our system of education which reflect on the University organization and work, we have not done so in a spirit of carping criticism of the University ; we have to acknowledge the large part it has played in the whole episode of educational progress in the country, even if it does not always rebound to its credit—often through no fault of its own ; nor does the advocacy of reformation of the educational system involve any serious reflection on the achievements of the University or on its galaxy of

intellectuals. "In circumstances of extraordinary difficulty," the Sadler Commission truly held, "the University has achieved a great work. All over Bengal, we found a grateful appreciation of its past services and a strong desire that it may be so developed as to meet the rapidly changing and extending needs of the country. But we cannot conceal our apprehensions at the consequences which are likely to follow from a continuance of the conditions (statutory, administrative and financial) under which its work is carried on. We believe that the evil effects of the present system are corroding the intelligence of young Bengal and that they will work increasing and irreparable mischief unless their causes are removed.

It is therefore our conviction that the reform of university and secondary education in the Presidency is a matter which does not safely admit of delay. India, with her new political responsibilities, is coming into the fellowship of nations. Her education from primary school to university, should be answerable to modern standard of what is best. Of late in Britain, in Western Europe, in Australia and in America there has been a widening of educational opportunity, an amendment of educational aims. A like change, made in a spirit which respects her own noblest traditions, is needed in India also. The ideals of a new age call insistently for a new purpose in education. India, for her own sake and for the sake of others, should bring her wisdom and experience to a task in which every nation is called to share. . . ." It was quite in the fitness of things that Dr. Sadler and his colleagues had the imagination and the sagacity to lift the question of reformation of the educational system in Bengal, and in India, from the narrow orbit of provincialism and invest it with a great national importance and an international significance. Surely no one, in his senses, will miss the cardinal fact that with the

efficient functioning of our educational system, recovered and resurrected from its century-old decay and deterioration, and renovated into a living and thriving instrument of national regeneration, is bound up our individual well-being and national progress ; and with the glorious tradition of her cultural internationalism and spiritual fellowship among the nations of the world, India's national greatness and progress, accelerated and worked out through her cultural renaissance and educational advance—through the process of diffusion of education and culture—cannot but be an event of far-reaching significance in international history. Apart from these splendid possibilities in the national and even in the international sphere, the question of the reformation and reconstruction of the entire educational system—which cannot, at this stage, be dealt with by compartments or piecemeal—must be taken up for its own sake and tackled thoroughly and constructive measures adopted speedily on as generous and large a scale as the tradition of her civilization and cultural excellence as well as the numerical strength of her population demand ; “. . . a comprehensive reconstruction of the university system” involving “a new departure in secondary and higher education in Bengal” was what the Sadler Commission advocated as the way of solution of the colossal problem of the reformation of our educational system—the problem which has been handed down from the last century and will not brook the least delay in its solution.

“Educational reform on a bold and generous scale,” opined the Sadler Commission, “may save Bengal from the loss and danger which threaten a country when the training of its educated classes has got out of gear with the economic needs of the nation. . . . The industrial and commercial interests of Bengal will be best served by a generation of young men trained to vigorous initiative, equipped with liberal culture, scientific in temper of mind, generous in

social purpose and freed from the shamefacedness about working with their own hands. . . .” It is not simply the commercial and industrial needs of the country and the age—to which a nation in order to live and thrive must react properly and to which it must adjust her educational system, which cry incessantly for a new departure in education ; but the very cultural basis of our national life, the primary condition of our existence as a nation in a world which is to-day at the crossing of ways—when all its ideologies and ideals and values seem to be in the melting pot and its political and social structures are tumbling down—call for the immediate planning and perfecting, for proper re-adjustment and adequate reform, of our education, and imperatively demand a departure from the century-old beaten track leading nowhere, from the unfruitful and dangerous channels into which the course of educational development has been dragging the community so long. As Dr. Sadler and his colleagues said, . . . “A new kind of education is needed to fit young Bengal for the new kinds of work which it is in the interest of themselves and of their country that they should be better prepared to undertake. . . .” But this ‘new kind of education’ must be based on a new departure from the old, and not merely presented in a new and attractive garb with a veneer of external gloss ; it should react to the spirit of the age and respect the spirit of our national culture and heritage. A generation has passed since Rabindra Nath declared in his clarion voice\* “. . . Never do we pay heed to our own capacity and our mind, to the nature or the real needs of our country ; nor can we summon the requisite courage for the purpose. I have no inclination to be engulfed into another new disappointment by entertaining any hope that our education will be yielding new results

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\*Extracts rendered into English from the poet’s Bengali brochure *Shiksha* pp. 67 and 77.

if only we re-establish it under a new name—our education which has landed us on this predicament. . . . The edifice of national education has to-day presented itself to us as the personification of amelioration and well-being. Our mind, our language and work have found their fullest affinity in it. We could never disown it ; we have got to bring our worship to it. The nation will rise to its greatness through the organization of this work of worship. . .” We, Indians, as a nation have got to regain the birth-right of our pristine greatness in the altered circumstances of modern epoch through the irresistible impulsion of education taken up in a real worshipful and a new spirit as indicated in the prophetic words of the philosopher-poet.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SADLER COMMISSION'S SCHEME OF REFORMS IN THE SPHERE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

#### I

Sadler Commission's emphasis on the conditions of success of any 'new plan' of thorough reformation ; increased expenditure on it will repay itself—Their review of the work in schools—The West adjusts its systems to newer factors—The need of adjustment in India—Delimitation of University and secondary stages—A central, co-ordinating, representative authority with ample resources can work the necessary reforms and rejuvenate the system—The work devolving upon this authority will be 'many-sided and difficult'—Transference to the Department of Public Instruction of the University's powers over schools and colleges, no solution—The Commission's suggestion to raise the status of the Director—The constitution of the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education as proposed by them ; it cannot escape criticism—The President should not be a wholetime, salaried officer as suggested but a public man of recognised standing, the office should be an honorary one—Duties and responsibilities of the Board, the Board to work the entire system of Intermediate and Secondary Education in the province—The Board's constitutional relation to the Government as defined by the Commission, open to serious criticism and against the spirit of their Report.

From what we have said in the preceding chapters about the more serious evils resulting from, or associated with, the functioning of our century-old educational system, some broad fundamental issues emerge into prominence. In the first place, we are driven to the irresistible conclusion that no scheme of reforms will meet the requirements of the appalling situation in the field of education in Bengal unless it is capable of transforming the dead mass of the decaying system into a living and thriving factor in the national life and a dynamic force in the re-generation and re-ordering of

society, towards which we are inevitably led. No scheme will have a chance of success, no scheme will accomplish the long deferred work of reformation unless it aims at 'the new kind of education' needed for Bengal ; not only so ; in the words of the Sadler Commission, "if it is to lift the heavy mass of present system to a higher level, the energy which the new movement supplies" must "be concentrated at the right points . . . . The energy which has to be collected and applied shows itself for the most part in private aspirations and in family aims. Family opinion therefore and individual minds will have to be convinced that the new plan is better than the old plan. Nothing can be done unless the new arrangement is plainly better than what now exists and is more likely to satisfy personal needs. It must give more, and give it more profusely. At the same time what it gives, must be of far better quality and more closely adapted to the different grades of capacity among those who receive it. It must be liberal in aim, and yet must serve practical purposes. It must be so widespread that no one is shut out, and yet be selective in the sense of giving to each individual the training which will meet his needs. It must have public authority behind it, and yet must allow scope for private initiative and have regard to diversity of local needs. Yet, even if all this can be done, many will oppose change through not realizing the gravity of the situation or through being wedded to the established order of things. To overcome this inertia a concentration of the available energy will be required. . . . The remedy will be found in a thorough-going reform of secondary and higher education in Bengal. . . . The schools should have a wider curriculum, a larger proportion of trained teachers and improved equipments. Many parents who are making bitter sacrifices in order to give a high school education to their sons get a very poor return for their self-denial. . . ."

These were among the fundamental considerations that weighed with Dr. Sadler and his colleagues and they were "convinced that nothing short of a comprehensive reconstruction of the university system will meet the needs of the time". Desperate and dismal as the situation in Bengal was, not only in the educational sphere but, with its sinister shadow, in the social, political and economic spheres also, they were clearly of opinion that "educational reform on bold and generous plan may save Bengal from the loss and danger which threaten a country when the training of its educated classes has got out of gear with the economic needs of the nation". All earnest work of reformation, all schemes of reform in the realm of education in Bengal, must aim at no less, and must be judged by this supreme standard—by their capacity to 'save Bengal from loss and danger'. We have got to subject all schemes to this one great test. The scheme of reforms, and the constructive policy formulated by the Sadler Commission for the reconstruction and renovation of our educational system, for the re-ordering of our academic life, must also come under this crucial test, as we proceed. But their scheme is rightly postulated by, as it was sought to be based upon, two fundamental conditions of abiding importance. The Commissioners emphatically held that any scheme of comprehensive reforms, to have a reasonable chance of success, must have the support of 'strong movement of public opinion', and of adequate public funds, without which all reforms, all attempts at reconstruction in the realm of education, must invariably fail. For, the educational system in Bengal, specially in its secondary stage, has been built up patiently by the public at no little sacrifice ; and public opinion, guarding as it does its internal freedom jealously, would not hand it over to untried and untrusted hands under the artificial impulsion of a legislature imposed



against its wishes ; nor can the country-wide system working in a moribund state for the greater part of a century be thus made to respond to what is best according to modern standard, and respecting at the same time the spirit and tradition of its own culture. "The fact is", wrote the Sadler Commission, "that secondary, like university, education in Bengal has reached a stage at which further satisfactory progress is impossible without a complete re-organization of the existing administrative conditions. The whole system is suffering from anæmia, which is due partly to lack of funds, partly to the lack of an energetic purpose aiming at improved standards of teaching and of educational opportunity. There can be no substantial improvement without reconstruction. The existing system cannot be patched up. What is needed is far-reaching re-organization. And such a re-organization is impossible except on two conditions. It must have behind it a strong movement of public opinion ; and it must be accompanied by greatly increased expenditure from public funds. . . . We ourselves entertain no doubt that a greatly increased expenditure to which public funds and private liberality should contribute, is necessary in the interests of Bengal and that, if wisely directed, it will be remunerative. . . ." This clear statement from so authoritative a body of experts as the Sadler Commission were, ought to embolden all cautious politicians and hesitating legislators and halcy Ministers who might desist from taking up this scheme of reforms for fear of excessive expenditure ; they should remember, no expenditure is more productive than what is spent wisely on education, as nothing is more costly and injurious to society and individual as ignorance, and false ideas and ideals. We might recall, in this connection, the striking words from Sir Asutosh's last and memorable (Calcutta) Convocation speech: ". . . It is a truism that

education of all grades has suffered in this country by reason of inadequate financial aid from the State. Let us not forget that education is the one subject for which no people has ever yet paid too much. The more they pay, the richer they become ; for nothing is so costly as ignorance, nothing so cheap as knowledge. Explore the history of civilization, ancient and modern, you will find that the people who provided the greatest educational opportunities were always the most wealthy, the most respected and the most secure in the enjoyment of every right of person and property. This truth will be hundredfold more manifest in the future than it has been in the past, as the struggle for existence grows keener and keener. . . .”

Before formulating in detail their scheme of reforms for secondary education the Sadler Commission had made it perfectly clear, lest there should be any chance of misunderstanding, that ‘the country needs more and better education’ ; nothing was further from their mind or from the purpose of their recommendations than any restriction of education in any shape or form ; ‘the constructive policy’ that they were called upon to frame aimed at thorough reconstruction, better and more logical functioning of the entire system, and planned expansion and development under autonomous governing bodies fully representative of, and responsive to, public opinion and to public and individual needs of the people, and supported by the Government. Unfortunately for Bengal, for India too, prolonged proximity to, and association with, an evil of long standing, has bred a suicidal inertia and a fatal tolerance in the public mind ; the public opinion in Bengal has got to be roused from its dangerous indifference, to a sense of the peril which, as Prof. Rushbrook Williams hinted, has overtaken, and brought about the failure of, many of the modern democracies and threatens to engulf Bengal and India

through false ideas and ignorance ; the only way to get away from this national disaster which is already upon us is the immediate and radical reconstruction and resuscitation of our educational system and improvement and extension of educational facilities to meet the growing and various needs of the community and the individual. The imminence of this national disaster, the proximity and the magnitude of the danger threatening our country and society through the decay and collapse of our system of education, of secondary education to no lesser extent, will be apparent from this graphic review of the Sadler Commission ; “ . . . We are compelled to regretfully acknowledge that very few of the schools are giving the bare essentials of a liberal education. In the great majority of them physique and health are neglected ; there is no training of the hand ; the study of nature is practically ignored ; the aesthetic and emotional sides of a boy's nature are disregarded ; corporate life is meagre ; training through responsibility is generally undeveloped ; little guidance is given as to right or wrong ; methods of class teaching are crude and clumsy. In most schools, vernacular, mathematics, history are badly taught. Such a state of things injures the interests of all the boys whether they are going forward to the University or not. It is hurtful to the whole community, which suffers from the failure of the schools to develop and train the powers of the younger generation. And the mischief is not lessened by the flux of time. On the contrary . . . it tends to deteriorate under the difficulties caused by increasing numbers of pupils in the schools and the inexperience of the teachers. Four-fifths of the members of the staff have nothing better to guide them in their work than the recollections of the methods which were employed when they themselves were boys at schools. We are driven to the conclusion that the inadequacy of the schools injures the

University and is one of the gravest defects in the educational system of Bengal."

Thus the problem of the thorough reformation of the secondary education in Bengal is, in a sense, more urgent, as it is more complex and difficult, than the problem of University reconstruction, even though the work of delimitation of the secondary, and University, stage is admittedly the common preliminary to both. The line of demarcation between the school, and the university, work has got to be first determined and indicated anew, before the real problem either in the field of secondary, or of university, education, can be effectively tackled. The old dividing line might or might not have served its purpose in the last century when it was introduced. But to-day—even in the first quarter of the present century—there have been radical changes in the conception of educational aims and values ; education in the advanced countries in the West, like any other major sphere of national activities, had not only to broaden its base but to adjust its courses and stages to suit the growing and multifarious needs of the community. In Bengal, in India, no reform is more important and urgent than the broadening of the aim and the clarification of the purpose, and the proper delimitation and differentiation of the stages, of education. To rescue education from the extreme narrowness of its aims and courses—specially in the stages which precede the university stage in the West—is the first task before the reformer. Not only the individual, but also the State and society, have got to keep pace with the progress of civilization in the economic and social development ; the political and industrial revolution and commercial expansion in Europe—in England—had thrown out of gear the old machinery of the State and necessitated thorough and radical changes in the constitution of the various countries therein ; the old educational thought

and policy, the old educational system and organization, the old courses and methods of study have had all to undergo thorough reformation and even complete transformation—in order to keep pace with the political and social changes. India in spite of her prolonged political subjection, religious conservatism and social rigidity, cannot for ever escape from the impact of those tremendous forces which brought about these changes in the West—India cannot be immune for long from the repercussions of the economic, social and political transformations in the world. India has got to adjust herself to the changed conditions of life or perish ; her political, social and—last but not the least—her educational system and organization must react and respond to these inevitable changes in the world. In the domain of education, the greatest and most radical changes are necessary in the secondary stage, which is vitally connected both with the primary and university stages, feeding the one with its teachers and the other with its students ; but its intimate association with the life of the community at various points notwithstanding, it does not to-day meet its imperative needs, as it has failed to adjust itself to the crying necessities and changed conditions of life and has failed to respond to the spirit of the age.

The very first step in the reformation and re-organization of the secondary education in Bengal—and of higher education, too—must be the raising of the standard of admission to the university courses ; in the western countries it is only the degree courses, and not also what in Bengal goes by the name of Intermediate courses, which are included in the university stage ; and rightly so. In Bengal—we have seen—the students enter the university stage with their faculties undeveloped, their judgment immature and their intelligence untrained ; naturally, they cannot do justice to themselves or to their studies for which they might

or might not have aptitude or inclination ; many, again, do not, cannot, go beyond the Intermediate stage. In these circumstances, and according to the system in the western universities, the Sadler Commission justly recommended that 'the present Matriculation should cease to entitle a student to enter upon the University course' ; admission to the university course—'in preparation for a degree'—must be raised 'to the level of present Intermediate examination'. During these two years when the students just plod their way through the stereotyped intermediate course, they should be provided with better and much more varied training and should have the choice of much wider courses of study which are calculated to suit the different calibre and aptitudes of the individual students and to prepare them for their future careers and callings. The real university courses, they recommended, were to begin at the end of the present two years' course which they would see broadened to include many new and more useful subjects to be undertaken in new types of institutions ; at this stage in their life, the students would be in a better position to choose which among the different courses to be provided for them besides the existing ones would suit them best.

Thus the raising of the standard of admission to the University following the proper delimitation of the province of the University and school work will release considerable energy and resources of the community now not very profitably used in the intermediate stage in the University ; these resources and this energy might be directed into fruitful channels in giving these thousands of students a variety of useful training, a wider range of courses in a number of subjects better adapted to their own aptitude, and calculated to meet the needs of the age ; this reform will not only be a boon to large numbers of the students themselves who do no good to themselves or to their families in the present

intermediate stage, a great gain to the community which will be benefited by these students receiving proper and necessary training and education, fitting them to be more useful and successful members of their families and of society ; it will also give no little relief to the University by the elimination of indifferent and unsuitable elements which are a source of unnecessary burden and complication. But it must be clearly understood that the simple act of delimitation of the province of the university, and school, work will not alone meet the necessities of the peculiar situation in the field of secondary education in Bengal. The Sadler Commission was careful to add, “. . . But we should not approve such a raising of the standard of admission to the University if it was proposed as an isolated reform, still less if it were suggested as the sole remedy for present defects. We recommend it in context with a number of much needed additions to the educational resources of the Presidency. It is not as a limiting or restrictive measure that it appeals to us, but as one which will liberate for other and more fruitful use, two important, and often mis-directed, years in a student's life. . .” The Commission also suggested that the examination at the end of the high school course should be called High School Examination and the one, to be held at the end of the next two years' course, Intermediate College Examination, instead of Matriculation and Intermediate Examinations respectively, as at present.

But no reform or re-organization of the system of secondary education in Bengal is possible without, no reform is more urgent than; the lifting of the whole body of the national workers in this sphere from their present tragic and chronic state of poverty, by substantially raising the status, the pay and prospects of these poor, struggling teachers ; bound up with this step is the recovery of the hundreds of

schools from their fatal moribund condition due to extreme financial stringency. "The improvement of the salaries and prospects of teachers in secondary schools is an indispensable condition of reform. The power of allocating substantial grants to inspected schools under management of private bodies is not less necessary to success. . ." We have, we are sure, said enough of the serious evils and of the grave dangers to society and the individuals resulting from the practical collapse of the system of our education under which the schools and colleges have been suffered to work so long ; they intensify deterioration and decay—tending to reduce supervision and inspection to mockery, specially as the financial support necessary for keeping the struggling institutions in proper or even workable efficiency has not been forthcoming during the greater part of a century. The remedy for all these serious evils which have been dwarfing the academic and cultural growth, and stultifying the educational efforts, of the people, will be found, as suggested by the Sadler Commission, in the establishment of a central, co-ordinating. statutory authority thoroughly equipped with administrative and executive powers, having ample financial resources and experience and ability to work the necessary reforms to transform and galvanize the moribund system into a dynamic force in national life—an authority which will not only be fully representative of all the principal parties concerned, but responsive to the spirit and the necessities of the age. The work devolving upon an authority like this, charged with the task of 're-organization of the secondary and the intermediate education in Bengal' will be 'many-sided and difficult'. As the Sadler Commission said, ". . . It will first have to plan the courses of training for pupils during the two years corresponding to the present intermediate stage, and to provide these courses at a number of convenient centres throughout Bengal. This part of the



controlling authority's work will call for a study of the needs of the various callings in life for which pupils prepare themselves, both the callings like business, agriculture and the lower grades of Government service . . . and also the callings for which a further course at the University or at a professional school is indispensable or expedient. The authority would then be in a position to decide what kind of examination it would be appropriate to hold at the end of these alternative courses of higher secondary education, and how these examinations should be conducted.

The authority would next find it necessary to determine what examination should admit to this two years' course and what subjects should be compulsory in it. . . . In order to decide what requirements it would be practicable to exact from the high schools in regard to this examination, the authority would be obliged to review the equipment of the high schools, the qualifications and skill of their teachers, the healthiness of the school premises, the means afforded for physical development and training, the school libraries, the aims and methods of inspection, and the conditions upon which the schools should receive subsidies from the public funds. But the duties of such an authority would necessarily embrace a wider field. Some of the courses provided in the stage of higher secondary education (now called the intermediate) would . . . include a considerable measure of technical training. A wise adjustment of the technical part of these courses to liberal education on the one hand, and to special needs of industry and agriculture on the other would be possible only to an authority which acted in close co-operation with the department responsible for technical education or was itself responsible for at least considerable part of it. . . ." It will, we hope, be quite clear from what we have just quoted, that to carry out the necessary re-organization of, and much needed improvement in, the

'secondary, and higher secondary, education in Bengal' will necessitate a 'central authority' exercising 'superintendence' over (a) secondary education, lower and higher, (b) a part of technical education, (c) continuation classes, if any, (d) part 'of preliminary training for certain professions and (e) the work of many institutions giving professional preparation for teachers'. The authority would, moreover, be called upon to 'give special attention to the courses of education for girls'. No body of educationists and administrators, no public authority could be asked to take over a more onerous, a more complicated, a more delicate and difficult work, affecting not only the lives and activities of hundreds of institutions, of thousands of students and of their families, but also the future well-being and progress of the nation. There must be an atmosphere of perfect confidence and amity, of co-operation and co-ordination before any such authority, even with amplest financial support from the State, could successfully carry out the colossal task. . . "The public must feel assured," the Sadler Commission held, "that the proposed changes will give larger and more varied educational opportunities to the younger generation and that the financial sacrifices which they entail may confidently be expected to yield a remunerative return. Above all, the central educational authority must be so constituted as to command the confidence of the different sections of the community whose co-operation is indispensable to the success of any adequate plan of educational reform. . ."

The Commission frankly 'dismissed as impracticable' the plan which might seem 'at first sight to offer a simple solution of the difficulty' as regards this 'central authority' ; but the problem is not solved by transferring to the Department of Public Instruction, long out of touch with the spirit and necessities of the present age, and

admittedly 'impotent', 'the powers now exercised by the University with regard to the recognition of the schools' and the affiliation of colleges, in intermediate courses. This kind of 'reform' 'would be regarded as a reactionary measure and as a menace to educational freedom'. Moreover this plan or any other like it would be useless ; mainly because the resources of the Department in men and money are so limited that it cannot induce all other private schools to come under it and let them partake of the requisite financial help ; naturally a fair majority of the schools does not care to come under its jurisdiction ; besides about 800 schools which are 'altogether outside the range of its direct influence', there are a number of intermediate colleges and the intermediate portions of all other colleges, many institutions offering practical training and technical or professional education ; almost all of these have to be looked after and given the necessary financial help or expert guidance and encouragement by the central authority having powers of superintendence and direction over the entire enlarged field of secondary, and higher secondary, education in Bengal. But the Sadler Commission would make the Director the 'principal adviser to the Member or Minister responsible for education' ; we have not much to say against this arrangement, provided there is a right type of Director, and not the usual type of a hide-bound self-centred official ; incidentally, there has not been a single Indian in the post of the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal. We must, however, point out that with the establishment of the central authority controlling, directing and organizing secondary education, in the larger acceptance of the term also, with the reconstruction and reorganisation of the University system, the Department of Public Instruction would be relieved of a good portion of its work, and the Director, a great deal of his present responsibilities. The Minister in charge of Education might

well have a non-official as his principal adviser and even collaborator ; surely there are a good many educationists and administrators, not in the Service but probably more able and experienced in the sphere of public education in Bengal, who can be of as much, or even greater, help to the Minister as his adviser and associate than a European official or a member of the Indian Educational Service.

The central, co-ordinating authority—the character and functions of which we have just discussed, and which only can hope to effect a thorough reorganization and re-ordering of the system of secondary education and raise it to a level of real efficiency as an institution able to promote national progress and individual well-being—should be and should be designated as the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education ; this forms the cornerstone, the pivotal point, in the constructive scheme of reforms advocated by the Sadler Commission for the re-modelling and re-ordering of the system of secondary education in Bengal. They also held—and rightly so—that no solution of the problem, no reorganization is possible in this important sphere unless this authority or Board is entrusted with three functions now performed by the University, functions, namely, ‘the determination of the courses of study which should be followed by the institutions providing intermediate training and in the high schools in preparation for that training ; the second duty is the conduct of two very important public examinations’. The third duty would consist in determining which of the high schools should be privileged to present candidates for the lower of these two examinations, and which institutions (imparting intermediate education), for the higher. But the University was not to suffer any pecuniary loss on account of the transference of some of its fee-income to the Board. The Sadler Commission proposed that the University should receive from the Government, in addition,

and without prejudice, to any subsidy required for its own reconstruction or expansion of normal working, 'an annual grant to compensate it in full' for the loss for its not inconsiderable annual fee-income derived from the candidates appearing at the present Matriculation and Intermediate Examinations. They also suggested that this central and representative Board should be established as an essential part of their comprehensive scheme for thorough reformation of the entire educational system in Bengal (except the primary stage), even before the reconstruction of the University, as the former must precede, and would facilitate, the latter reform.

We have already referred to the perfunctory and ill-conceived attempts made in official quarters, to 'reform' a part of the educational system in Bengal ; and they raised a storm of controversy and intense popular opposition, as anticipated by the Sadler Commission who warned the Government and the public to guard against it ; for a strong popular opposition against any scheme of reforms for the educational system which has been built up and is being worked by non-official agencies in Bengal negatives the essential and indispensable condition of its success—the necessary co-operation of the public and the support of public opinion. At the present moment the country-wide and powerful agitation and the controversy that have arisen in connection with the Secondary Education Bill sponsored by the present Government centre round the constitution and composition of the Board to be set up ; if the character and constitution of the Board receive public support, there will be little controversy about the proposed functions and responsibilities to be entrusted to it. It is a pity that the reformers' in Bengal have, so far, shewn little of the scrupulous care taken, or the keen anxiety evinced, by the Sadler Commission regarding the vital question of the

character and composition of their Board ; as a matter of fact the reformers gave the Sadler Report a wide berth. The Sadler Commission were guided by some fundamental ideas and basic principles in framing the character and the constitution of their Board ; while guaranteeing effective representation of the interests of the different communities concerned, they had not the remotest intention to make the Board communal in character or outlook ; along with the representation of the principal parties concerned in the educational progress and reform, they rightly took cognizance of the other powerful factors in the situation—the growing necessities and crying needs of the country and society to which educational progress must respond and to which educational system must adapt itself in order to be really serviceable and effective, and not an anomaly ; hence they advocated representation on the Board of such important factors in society as agriculture, industry, commerce, medicine ; but they wanted the Board to be strictly limited in number ‘on the grounds of economy and administrative convenience’, and to have a non-official majority, with not less than three members from the Hindus and three from the Muslims to represent ‘Hindu and Muslim opinions and interests’.

The Sadler Commission proposed the following constitution of the Board:—

“A President, who should be a salaried and wholtime officer appointed by Government for a period of years to be defined.

The Director of Public Instruction, *ex-officio*.

One Member elected by non-official members of the Legislative Council of Bengal.

Seven University representatives, five being appointed by the University of Calcutta (one of these having special knowledge of mufassal conditions) and two by the University of Dacca. The appointments should be made in each case

by the University Court, but it should be the duty of the Executive Council to suggest names for the consideration of the Court. Some of these appointments might be so made as to include representatives of the kinds of experience mentioned below. Casual vacancies should be filled by the Executive Council.

Five to eight Members (as might be found desirable or necessary) appointed by the Government of Bengal and chosen on the ground of their special knowledge of education and with a view to representation of the following categories of experience, if not otherwise provided for:—

Agriculture ;

Industry and Commerce ;

Medicine and Public Health ;

Teaching in intermediate colleges and in secondary schools ;

The education of girls ;

The educational interests of the domiciled community.

Ordinary members to hold office for three years and be re-eligible.

A Board thus constituted would be able to meet at sufficiently frequent intervals and to pursue a continuous and consistent policy. Important executive responsibilities would necessarily devolve upon the President to whom, with the help of the Secretary and his staff, would fall the duty of arranging the business in a form which would enable the Board to make a rapid decision upon administrative questions submitted to it. . . . The Board would find it necessary to appoint expert standing committees to deal with the special branches of its work in connection with the various examinations and courses of study." For the purpose of discussing important questions with the educationists in the districts, the Board could, if it would, form, "in consultation with the Government, either Divisional

Advisory Committees or a general Advisory Council widely representative of experience in secondary and intermediate education in the Presidency . . . occasional meetings would suffice for its deliberations . . .”

Before we proceed further in our review of the Sadler Commission's recommendations on this important subject which is exercising the public mind so much, thanks to the reactionary Government Bill on the legislative anvil, we have to observe that the Sadler Commission was probably unfavourably impressed with the possibilities of a 'large and varied body' controlling secondary education in Bengal ; hence they did not think it wise and necessary, in the case of the Board of Secondary Education, to recommend a large deliberative and consultative body, with some statutory powers, like the Court of Dacca or of Calcutta University. But Dr. Sadler and his colleagues were surely aware that one of the darkest spots in the British rule in India is its tradition of bureaucratic self-sufficiency and disregard of public opinion, and indifference alike to public feeling and public needs. They had expressed themselves rather strongly, as we have seen, on the question of State control and interference in public education and they respected the public opinion and sentiments on the question of preservation of the internal autonomy of the various institutions in the country. They, however, provided no check or safeguard against any possible indifference, or high-handedness or vagaries on the part of their Board but looked to the rather indirect pressure of public opinion and the latter's ultimate responsibility to the Government for a corrective. A larger body sitting periodically might have exercised a salutary check and a regulating influence over the policy and activities of the Board, as the Senate is supposed to do in case of the University. Of the important elements and interests to which have not been assigned any direct represen-



tation on the Board but which have contributed immensely to the progress of secondary education in Bengal are the landed classes—including the landed aristocracy—and the founders and managers and donors of more than a thousand schools ; in view of their past services to, and their valuable association with, the majority of the schools—which have been handsomely appreciated in the beginning of the Sadler Report—they would naturally strengthen the Board and lend a tone of reality to its decision and deliberation.

We have another observation to make as regards the Office of the President. Regard being had to the important nature and far-reaching effects of its work, and to the necessity of widespread confidence and prestige it must command in the country, it would be better if the President of the Board be not a 'salaried and wholetime officer' in the cadre of the Indian, or Bengal Educational, Service. A part of the administrative, and even of the executive, work which would devolve on the President, might be conveniently done, under the direction of the President and with the help of the Secretary and his staff, by a salaried and wholetime officer ; he might be put in charge of the office and given some suitable designation as Principal or Chief Officer or even Director of Secondary Education ; but he must be a popular educationist of no mean standing and experience. The Office of the President should be made much more dignified and exalted and men of outstanding eminence and ability in the public life, commanding the confidence, of the country could be induced to accept the position if its prestige be raised high and a tradition, as high, helped to get established. The position—and Office—of the President could be levelled up with those of the Mayor or of the Vice-Chancellor of the University, of Calcutta ; and it will require considerable independence and tact on the part of its incumbent. If there are no dearth of men of pre-eminence for the Mayoral chair,

or the Vice-Chancellor's position, there would not be any for the position of the President of the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education ; we are quite sure the Hon'ble Judges of the Calcutta High Court, specially the Indian Judges with their long tradition of distinguished public service in various spheres of life outside their court-room will be quite willing to shoulder the onerous responsibility of the office of the President, whether they are members of the existing Bench or have retired from it ; incidentally, considerable saving would result from this arrangement.

We also feel that the Board must be kept in living touch with the academic life in the country, and must maintain a contact 'with those engaged in educational work in the various districts' through the medium of Divisional or District Committees, suitably constituted, and holding their meeting periodically. In this way, too, the Board will not lay itself open to the severe criticism that so high a body as the Government of India itself had levelled against the University of Calcutta in these words: "It is impossible that a syndicate sitting in Calcutta should control 789 schools distributed over an area of 78.699 square miles. Rules become relaxed, orders are evaded and the influence of inspecting staff weakened. . . ."

We have already touched, in brief, upon the important duties which will devolve upon the Board ; some of these duties are now divided between the Department of Public Instruction and the University, leading to deterioration and weakening of the whole system of education. ". . . Its work," said the Sadler Commission, "will fall into two main divisions, inseparable from one another but nevertheless so distinct as to admit of separate description, *viz.*, that concerned with intermediate courses and examinations and that concerned with the high English schools." At the present moment, the system under which the Univer-

sity maintains its contact with its colleges giving intermediate training leaves much to be desired ; the resources in men and money that are required to enable the University to judge and pronounce upon the efficiency and equipments of these colleges are wanting ; there is only one Inspector of Colleges maintained by the University who has to report upon the work and activities of a large number of colleges scattered all over Bengal and Assam ; upon the report of this single officer—he might be accompanied by some other members of the University during his inspection—it has to grant affiliations to new institutions and continue or discontinue affiliations to old ones according as they maintain the requisite standard or not ; but even if some of the institutions fall short of the standard through paucity of funds, it is not in a position to lend financial help to them and see that they come up to the standard ; it will have no other alternative but to refuse its affiliation. This indeed is a most anomalous position for the University. It is only the Government, acting through the Department of Public Instruction, which alone can come to the rescue of these struggling institutions ; but then, it has no direct agency to ascertain the state of things in these institutions, it does not maintain a living contact with them. The Sadler Commission wanted to remedy this unnatural and peculiar system which is a serious anachronism in the modern conditions and is not conducive to progress of education on sound lines. The duty of conducting the intermediate examination will entail a large and efficient staff of visiting examiners who would have to visit the various intermediate colleges in the course of their work. “They would inspect the teaching in the different branches of instruction. . . . They would report to the Board upon the efficiency of the institutions as well as upon the attainments of individual candidates. The Board would thus be informed . . . of the

standard of work done in the institutions concerned." Thus the Board would be in close and intimate touch with the institutions giving intermediate training and would be in a position to help and guide, recognise and affiliate or disaffiliate them, as the individual cases require, in such a way as is impossible under the present division of functions or in any system of dual control and direction. "By reason," further added the Sadler Commission, "of its intimate knowledge of the work of the intermediate institutions, the Board would be the authority best qualified to determine what grants should be given, out of the public funds voted for the purpose, to recognised intermediate institutions under non-Government management. And as the body most familiar with what is required in intermediate education in order to meet the needs of students in Bengal, the Board will also be better fitted than any other authority to undertake the responsibility for staffing and maintaining those of the intermediate institutions which will be the property of the Government. The duties of recognising the intermediate institutions as efficient, of planning their courses of instruction, of conducting their examinations, of inspecting and guiding their work, and of assigning to them grants from public funds which may be needed to secure their adequate staffing and equipment are so intermixed and dependent upon one another that it would be wise to entrust them all to one body. A partition of these duties between the two co-ordinate authorities would be artificial and embarrassing. . . ." In these circumstances the Board, as recommended by the Sadler Commission, should be entrusted with all these functions so as to ensure the smooth and better working of the the system as far as intermediate or higher secondary education is concerned. With regard to the high English schools, the responsibility of granting recognition to them, and of conducting the examination (coming

at the end of their course)—now belonging to the University—would fall on the Board. The Board would also be naturally called upon to grant recognition to new schools and discontinue it in cases of existing, unworthy ones ; so it will have to keep itself in touch, and “intimately acquainted with the state of those schools in general and with the standard which it is practicable to enforce in regard to their teaching and equipment.” Thus the Board must have a large and efficient staff to enable it to accomplish all these difficult tasks and would thus be in the best position to undertake and perform “the duty of laying down the regulations for the high English schools, of managing those which are the property of Government, of apportioning among the aided schools the public funds available for the assistance of their work, and of giving guidance to them by a system of inspection.” Here again these important works had better be undertaken by a single central authority like the Board ; or the division of functions would arrest the progress of education and lead to irritation and embarrassment. Take for instance, the new requirements of the high school examination, the new courses of science, geography and hygiene, to name only a few of the subjects which must be taught in the high schools according to the modern standard, or some other new regulations for the betterment of these institutions ; most of these institutions are not, in a majority of cases, sufficiently well off to come up to these new standards or function efficiently under these new regulations ; the Board will not be in a position to enforce these regulations in, or help, these struggling institutions in coming up to the required standard, if it is unable to give the necessary financial assistance to them from public funds.

As the Sadler Commission wrote, “. . . This would deprive it (the Board) of a power necessary to the full

efficiency of its work and might lead either to the postponement of important reforms or to the imposition of new requirements upon schools financially unprepared to meet the expenditure entailed by them. We think therefore that the wiser course would be to entrust to the Board full responsibility of administration of all Government high English schools and for determining the conditions upon which grants-in-aid should be given to high schools under non-Governmental management. Under any other arrangement there would be waste of public money through divided jurisdiction and duplicated inspection, as well as delay in administration through dual control."

As regards the financial arrangements, the Commission proposed that the Board would annually submit to Government "a budget estimate of the sums required during the ensuing financial year for secondary and intermediate education in the Presidency, and in particular the heads of additional expenditure required." The Government would, of course, decide as to what amount should be released from the exchequer for the expenditure to be incurred by the Board and the details of expenditure necessary for "high schools, intermediate institutions and other purposes should be left to the discretion of the Board subject to such conditions as the Government might think well", as for example, a condition that a certain amount should be earmarked for some specific purpose (for education of the backward communities) ; we have already referred to the recommendations of the Commission that the Board would maintain the Government intermediate institutions and high schools and would make grants-in-aid to those which would be under non-Government management. As a result of this arrangement the public would feel that a vital national concern like the secondary education is in the hands of an authority able and representative and responsive and alive

to the necessities of the age and the country ; and the Government could also depend upon the competence of a strong and experienced Board in an important sphere of the nation's affairs ; thus would ensue a smooth and efficient working of the new system bringing in a new era in the annals of educational progress of the country.

The Sadler Commission was quite definite on the point of the Board's constitutional relation to the Government. "Though it is desirable", they held, "that the Board should enjoy freedom to act upon its own responsibility in framing and enforcing its regulations which it may find necessary for the welfare of secondary and intermediate education, it must be ultimately responsible to the Government of the country ; and in the event of a final disagreement between it and the Government, the will of the latter must prevail." The plan of the Commission, according to them, reduces to a minimum the chances of such a disagreement ensuring to the Government its ultimate control if the Board persists in its own course of action to the end. The annual budget estimates and proposals of the Board might not receive assent of the Government in their original form and the regulations of the Board, which would be published, from time to time, will be before the Government, and the legislature and the public, all of whom might offer their criticism. But on a matter of principle or policy, or on any difficult educational problem if the Board feel so strongly as not to revise its decision, or alter its action in the light of the Government's criticism and disapproval, 'the Government should have the power of over-ruling the Board'. But the gravity of such a situation and the issue must be made clear to the public ; the Government, in such a contingency, should have the power 'after due inquiry, to require as an extreme measure the resignation of the Board' ; if this 'extreme measure' be adopted by the Government, it should immediately lay

before the legislature 'for its consideration and discussion' all the relevant papers '. . . . showing fully the matters in which the Government and the Board were in disagreement and the reasons which led the Government to require the Board's resignation'. It is quite possible, as the Commission hoped, that the chances of the Board's disagreement with the Government might be reduced to a minimum ; but the important question is whether the Board the majority of the members of which including its President would be appointed by the Government would be inclined to stick to its point of disagreement with the Government on vital questions even on the pain of dismissal or it would, under the guidance of its President, himself a wholetime salaried officer, give up the point and smooth over the difference and avoid the open rupture with the Government. It is here that our suggestion for a non-official and independent President—of a man of outstanding position in the public life of the country, occupying the post—acquires added force. A President of such pre-eminence, not a wholetime salaried officer appointed by the Government, would rise to the occasion and preserve his own, and the Board's, independence on a vital matter and would not be likely to yield to Government, lightly. Besides, it is not fair either to the Board or to the Government that the latter should hold such a *Damocles'* sword over the head of the Board if it dares disagree with the Government. Such a weapon in the hands of the Government would impair the independence of the Board and will not be conducive to its natural and smooth working. Nor would the reference to the legislature elected on the communal vote, which the Government would be bound to make in the extreme contingency of dismissing the Board, offer any check on the Government's vindictiveness or vagaries which often exasperate large and important sections of the people and drive them to desperation, as at



present ; for the simple reason that, thanks to the communal dispensation of the British Government, the Government installed in power by the communal electorate, would have a solid communal phalanx supporting their action in the legislature. On this point, a significant question of far-reaching constitutional import arises ; so long as any Government or legislature is formed or elected on the strength of communal franchise, neither can claim ultimate voice or sovereign power in the affairs of the nation, which is ordinarily possessed by the Government or the legislature under a normal democratic constitution working on political, and not communal, basis ; democracy disappears if a class or community can have a statutory majority foreign to the spirit of democracy ancient or modern. On these grave questions of principle and policy the precedent and procedure of the American constitution might be a guide. Some sort of procedure followed in America in the matter of amending and changing constitutional law might be adopted in, and adapted to, our country. If the Board or any such authority which is charged with the onerous and monumental work of reorganizing and renovating and running the entire and enormous system of secondary education in the province is to function satisfactorily, it must have freedom to shape its policy and enforce its regulations, it must have its academic, executive and administrative freedom secured from interference by the Government or individual Minister ; to arm the Government as 'it is constituted on a communal' basis with the ultimate veto and final voice in the shape of the Board's dismissal, is practically to strike at the root of the indispensable freedom of the Board. Besides, the sound and unassailable academic principle accepted and stressed by the Sadler Commission in the matter of State control and interference in the sphere of secondary education is incompatible with the Commission's recommendation

that "in the event of a final disagreement between it (the Board) and the Government, the will of the latter must prevail". The Commission itself, we have already seen, did not view with equanimity 'an increase of State control over secondary schools' and said, ". . . But it is well therefore to take precautions with a view to guarding secondary education not against State supervision which is salutary, but against State interference with the freedom in the schools . . . at the heart of the matter there is an element of danger in any great extension of Government control over schools. . . '\* Thus if the will of the Government prevails over that of the Board in its own academic sphere or in its administrative and executive work, 'the new syntheses between State supervision and private effort' which the Commission took so much pains to build will collapse like a house of cards. So far as the schools even in the present unsatisfactory system are concerned, the University, the Syndicate to be precise, has the final voice in the matter of recognition of any school which seeks the privilege of presenting candidates at the Matriculation examination conducted by it. In case of disagreement between the Board and Government on this point, if, according to the Commission's recommendations, the will of the Government does prevail over the Board's, it will be a sheer retrogression, and not an improvement upon the present system, bad as it undoubtedly is. At any rate, there must be some very definite limits within which the will of the Government might prevail against that of the Board and in the greater portion of their sphere of work, the authority and will of the Board must be final as against those of the Government communal in character and outlook as it must be so long as communal electorate is retained.

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\*Para 41, Chapter IV, Vol. I, Report of the Calcutta University Commission.

## II

Evils of the present system of examination *en masse*—The Intermediate College, and High School, Examination, proposed by the Commission to be both external and internal—The disastrous effects of examination as conducted under the existing system—Report of Sir J. J. Thomson's Committee in England—Present defective curricula and unsuitable Text Books for High schools impede knowledge and development of the young—Implications of a larger curriculum.—Inspection and Recognition of schools—The defects and the anomaly of the present system—Various new factors involved in the working of the schools are beyond the sphere of University which cannot claim sole direction in it—Reconciliation of these factors in a co-ordinating and representative Board—Raising of the pay and status of teachers is a condition precedent to success of any scheme for reforms—Present deplorable conditions of service, in Government and other schools, its baneful distinction—The Commission proposed abolition of both these types and urged their unification under a Central Board ; the new features of the unified service—Pension system of Government to be replaced by a Superannuation scheme ; its advantages over the present conditions, it will ensure 'mobility of teaching power' ; to be effective, the scheme must embrace the entire profession and must not exclude any part—The Commission's proposal for a 'Headquarter or Special Corps' of teachers is untenable in the present altered conditions—The effects of the working of their scheme upon the lot of the teachers, as envisaged by the Commission.

The innovations suggested by the Sadler Commission in the examinations to be held in places of the present Intermediate and Matriculation—to be called Intermediate College Examination and High School Examination—are interesting ; they must be a welcome departure, for the better, from the present system which has completely broken down, thrown out of gear, by sheer force of newer factors and increasing numbers of candidates. The inevitable result of this solely external mass examination of candidates the

swelling numbers of whom far exceed to-day the safest calculations of so cautious a body as the Sadler Commission cannot but be an unsatisfactory test of the candidates' attainments and abilities and learning, and affords no test of individual character and personality and training. The evils of this kind of mass examinations had not escaped the attention of the Government long before the labours of the Sadler Commission. So far back as February 1913, the Government of India—who then controlled the affairs of the University—expressed themselves as follows:

“The value of external examination cannot be overlooked. It sets before the teacher a definite aim and it maintains a standard ; but the definite aim often unduly overshadows instruction, and the standard is necessarily narrow and in view of the large numbers that have to be examined must confine itself to mere examination achievement, without regard to mental development or general growth of character. On the other hand, the drawbacks of external examinations are becoming more generally apparent . . . . They fail specially in India, in that they eliminate the teaching and inspecting staff as factors in the system, that they impose all responsibility upon a body acquainted but little (if at all) with the school examined, that they rely upon written papers which afford no searching test of intellect, no test at all of character or general ability, and that they encourage cram. A combination of external and internal examinations is required . . . a record should be kept of the progress and conduct of each pupil in the highest classes of the school, and that the inspector should enter his remarks upon these records at his visits and thus obtain some acquaintance with the career of each candidate during the two or three years before examination . . . . These records . . . would be valuable . . .”

But as we had occasion to remark earlier, these and other

serious evils under the weight of which the whole system has been breaking down and the basic object of education frustrated, have been known but not remedied or removed. This is the real tragedy of India under the British rule. In case of the Intermediate college examination, the Sadler Commission suggested both a written and an oral test, in which the candidate 'should have an opportunity of showing his knowledge and ability'. The written examination in all the subjects prescribed should be conducted by a Board of Examiners, the papers 'being normally same for all the intermediate colleges'. A body of visiting examiners, chosen for all subjects in the curriculum, "should be annually sent to each intermediate college during the closing months of the academic year. . . . The note books of the students should be preserved for inspection and should be open to examination by the visiting examiners". The commission also proposed that there should be from thirty to forty colleges offering intermediate education in the necessary subjects included in the curriculum and hoped that the same number of visiting examiners might be able to conduct the oral examination much in the same manner described in, and in the spirit underlying, the Resolution of the Government of India in 1913 we have just quoted from. "The introduction of this method of examination will, we believe," wrote the Commissioners, "have a healthy influence upon higher secondary education in Bengal and conduce to greater variety and interest in the methods of teaching. . . . But the concentration of intermediate training in a comparatively small number of institutions will make possible the adoption of this improved plan of examination with every hope of success."

As regards the High School Examination, the Commission proposed a similar plan, partly written and partly oral in case of a strictly limited number of schools which might be

carefully selected for 'their special excellence as places of education' and to which, similarly, visiting examiners would have to be sent. These highly efficient and well-managed schools would be visited by a body "of visiting examiners sufficiently large to conduct with expert knowledge an oral examination of the candidates in each group of studies. . . . The visiting examiners would examine the notebooks and exercises written by the pupils during the preceding school year or two school years ; they would review the methods followed by the teachers in the general course of introduction to science ; they would conduct in the laboratories a special test of candidates offering specific subjects in science ; they would examine the work done in the manual-training course ; they would report generally upon the organization of the school and upon its methods of teaching ; and they might also . . . take into account the reports made by the teachers upon the work of individual candidates. . . ."

But in spite of their belief that this kind of examination would act as 'a valuable corrective to the tendency of all very large systems of written examination to become mechanical in their methods and to repress individuality in methods of teaching', the Commission did not recommend all-round adoption of this plan ; not only because most of the schools are not in a position or efficient enough to submit to such an exacting test, but because this new system of conducting oral and individual examination by visiting examiners has got to be 'matured by experience and will more advantageously be applied by slow degrees'; also the administrative difficulties would be immense and would forbid its immediate application on a large scale ; hence the old method of written examination was to be followed in most of the schools.

The Sadler Commission's observations on the requirements of their High School Examination which was intended

to replace the present Matriculation call for little discussion ; for all thoughtful men are, as the Commission was, strongly in favour of their witnesses' views that the "course leading up to what is now called the Matriculation examination should comprise a wider range of compulsory subjects such as history, geography and natural science". We must, however, point out some of the serious evils of the present system of compulsory examination ; we have seen how the working of the entire system of education, in all its stages from secondary to university, is being unduly dominated by the pernicious influence of degrees and certificates ; thus the whole of the work in the various institutions—with very rare exceptions, as for example in the colleges conducted by the missionary authorities—suffers under the weight of unnatural obsession of examination. This obsession of examination is no doubt due, as we have seen and as was sympathetically recognised by the Sadler Commission, to the extreme economic pressure upon the majority of the families which send their sons to the schools and colleges with the primary object of getting them qualified for some calling or profession ; so that they might lessen the terrible economic pressure upon their families ; and notwithstanding their strong yearning, not even half the number of boys can afford to go in for education and training for their own sake ; nonetheless the effect of this baneful influence upon the students' career and the teachers' labours has been disastrous ; it frustrates the whole purpose and the basic aim of education. The problem here is as complicated and immense as it is urgent and it is only the combined and well planned efforts of the educationists and administrators, statesmen and businessmen, industrialists and landed magnates that can rescue our education and our academic life from the soul-killing influence and ruinous domination exercised by examination and degrees. But anything constructive and

big—which requires concerted and united action—has yet to be attempted and carried out in any sphere of our national life. On the other hand, educational ideas and thought in the western countries—in which category we place the ultra-modern country, U. S. A.—had been all along awakening, and were passing through a process of adaption, to the changing conditions and needs of the time. We quote some significant passages from the report of the Committee of which Sir J. J. Thomson was the Chairman and which worked in England before the Sadler Commission did in India: “. . . The examination (the first secondary school examination) should be regarded as a test of satisfactory work during the pupil's school course and should be of a character that it can be taken without any special preparation which would interfere with that course. The work of each candidate should be regarded as a whole, and the principle of compensation should be recognised both between the different groups and the different subjects of the same group. By this we mean that the comparative weakness in one part of the examination should not necessarily involve failure if the candidate has done really good work in other parts. . . . It ought not to be beyond the wit of man to devise a scheme of education that will be durable, yet elastic ; a scheme that, while securing that every child should be equipped with a knowledge of . . . will not cramp the teacher with a syllabus or even by a rigid tradition.”

But in our hapless country, the fatal fascination and sterilising influence of examinations work mischief both ways—and not solely in the class rooms. Careers of hundreds and thousands of students, a large number of whom come from families bending down under the tremendous weight of poverty, have been ruined owing to their failure in one subject or other ; not only this ; even if the students



just manage to pass in all the subjects, they will fail in the examination if only they fail to obtain a certain aggregate of marks—the minimum total marks that must be secured for success in the examination. Thus if our rulers have neglected the wider aspects of education and have not cared to follow a generous, nation-wide forward policy, our academic guardians, circumscribed as they are by the statute, have failed to show the necessary breadth of vision and sympathetic understanding in dealing with many of the paramount problems as they have been cropping up in the course of the progress of education in our midst. A sense of reality, an awakening to the crying needs of the fast changing situation have been long in dawning upon our educationists and our public men.

We have, however, to acknowledge that much of the improvements in the curriculum urged by the Sadler Commission for their High School Examination, has been lately worked out by the University for its Matriculation course ; so that a student has got to-day to acquaint himself with History of India and of England, Geography and Science which have been included in the compulsory subjects. But this is only one side of the complex problem ; the University can only prescribe the syllabus and fix the curriculum ; but they cannot be held responsible for all the suitable and necessary text-books ; there is a Text-Book Committee no doubt, which is supposed to pass and approve text-books for the huge and ever-increasing student population ; but a good many text-books that emerge out of the anvil and ordeal of the Text-Book Committee are so carelessly written, contain such gross errors and anomalies that no country or no progressive institutions in the West would touch them with a pair of tongs ; we have, however, been flooded and practically overwhelmed with the swelling stream of text-books, good, bad and indifferent, in a manner that is not

at all calculated to further the cause of education in the country. The text-books specially for the higher and highest classes have not been written with a view to meeting the needs of the overworked students laboriously preparing for the examinations. Take for instance, the History of England and of India, and Geography. There are 100 marks in the former subject and only 50 marks in the latter ; but the mass of matters that have been crammed in the bulky text-books bears no relation to, takes no cognizance of, the capacity of the average students or, the time at their disposal. And the result in the end cannot be happy, even though hundreds and thousands of students have been passing, are being allowed to pass, the University examinations who cannot get through any strict or even the requisite test and who have not acquired any tolerable knowledge and proficiency in their prescribed subjects of studies. Naturally, both the Government and the public, even their own family circles as well as the college authorities are dissatisfied and some, disgusted at the quality of the ever-increasing out-turns of the schools, as they emerge out of their Matriculation ; even though the students of Bengal are not at all lacking in intrinsic quality, in intellectual calibre and in the spirit of inquiry or even in diligence. "But the college authorities," wrote the Sadler Commission, "find no reason to be satisfied with the average result. On the contrary, they say that the intake from the schools is of such poor quality that little can be made out of it without a long preliminary drill. It is not that the material is bad but that it has been mishandled in the schools. . . ."

Few realize, however, what is involved in the widening of the courses of study, in a larger curriculum for the Matriculation, or the high school students, in the present circumstances ; " . . . a broader outlook affecting the whole course of school work, a more generous conception of what secondary

education should offer, an awakening of the pupil's minds" in neglected directions are among the implications of the wider courses ; here, again, we are faced with a stumbling block ; the utter and almost universal inadequacy of the schools' resources and equipments stares us in the face and is sure to frustrate any big attempts at reform. The Sadler Commission nicely sums up the situation thus, ". . . But it is clear that these improvements would not necessarily be secured by the simple expedient of making a few additions to the list of obligatory subjects in the examination and certainly not by prescribing two or more examination papers for which the memorising of a text-book might be sufficient preparation. Evidently, it is not merely an extension of the compulsory subjects in the examination but a change in the outlook and methods of the schools that is needed, if the intelligence of the pupils is to be more skilfully developed, if their powers of observation are to be quickened and trained. . . What is involved in the demand for a wider range of knowledge at the age of sixteen is nothing less than a substantial improvement in the staffing and equipment of secondary schools. . ." There we are up against a solid wall.

A rather interesting innovation urged by the Sadler Commission is that every school should present for the High School Examination conducted by the Board all the boys reading in the highest class ; stress is laid on this point so that if any school fail to present all its boys belonging to the top class, the Board would call for an explanation from its Head Master on this account. This innovation, it cannot be denied, is calculated to have a salutary effect on the schools in as much as this arrangement would prevent "unfair amount of attention being given to some of the pupils to the disadvantage of the rest. It will also deter the schools from promoting boys pre-maturely to the highest

class." The purpose of examination which is twofold, namely, to test individual students and to ascertain the standard attained by the class as a whole, is defeated if the latter objective is not reached. But we are afraid it will be long before this innovation can be successfully worked as it will have to contend against a tradition and practice prevailing for the greater part of a century.

The Matriculation Examination of Calcutta University is an event of no small significance in the academic life of Bengal ; it has steadily become an important event, pregnant with great possibilities in the bigger social life of Bengal, too, as the thousands upon thousands of the juvenile aspirants after a career struggle to pass through the first gateway of the Matriculation ; they hail to-day from all classes and all parts of the country many of which had hitherto no literary or educational traditions or aspirations. This event in the social and academic life of the country has all along been associated in the public mind with the University of Calcutta ; the sudden break with the past, the abrupt severance of this tradition in our academic, and even social, life involved in transferring the responsibility of conducting this examination—which has already acquired a historic significance—from the University to the future Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education, is a bold step ; to make this step, this rather important step, successful and popular, the Board which will conduct this examination, will have to command the confidence, and draw out the kindness of the public ; unless it is properly constituted and functions in a proper and dignified way, it will look small in comparison with the University and will lose the requisite public esteem and public confidence which the University enjoys so extensively and which are essentially necessary to its success in the transitional period.

But before a school can send up its students of the top

class for the Matriculation, or the High School, examination, it must get the privilege of being recognised as sufficiently competent ; for this reason, it has also to submit to periodical inspection by proper authority. Under the system introduced under the Act of 1904, it is the University, as we have seen, which grants the privilege of recognition to the schools, by virtue of which the school presents its candidates for the Matriculation at the end of the school course ; but it has not the requisite staff to inspect the schools which seek this recognition at its hands ; the work of inspection is undertaken by the Government Inspectors at the instance of the University and upon the report of this inspection by the Government's inspecting officers, submitted to the University through the Director of Public Instruction, the University has to depend and decide whether or not to grant a particular school the privilege of recognition. The whole position, specially that of the University, is not at all a happy one ; whatever might be the reasons for this unfortunate division of functions between the University and the Government Department, the system was bound to break down in the actual working during the later years, as the number of schools swelled enormously, following which the demand for recognition came from far and near ; the University was put in a rather unenviable position ; not all the schools that sprang up in response to strong local demands, and the growing needs, of the community, for educational facilities to be placed within easy reach of all, came up to the requisite standard of efficiency in respect of staff and equipment for lack of sufficient funds. Many of the older or working schools might also fall from their normal and necessary level of excellence and efficiency owing simply to financial stringency and loss of income ; what is the University to do in their cases? If it were to refuse to grant the privilege of recognition to these insti-

tutions, quite a large number of students will be put to good deal of trouble and difficulty and the institutions themselves will suffer and degenerate more rapidly, as the only touch with, and check from, the University will be gone ; in the case of new institutions seeking recognition but not coming fully up to the required standard the dilemma of the University is not lesser ; if it refuses to give recognition to these new schools which have also risen in response to local needs and demands, the cause of education will suffer ; the University gets over this dilemma by generally granting recognition to these institutions—unless they are weighed down with too much inefficiency and incompetency—but granting it provisionally—subject to certain conditions being fulfilled ; in other cases, the University would grant recognition for a short and specific period to the institutions which though they do not fully come up to, or maintain, the requisite standard of efficiency—come very near it and try hard to reach it ; but as it happens in very many cases, the conditions attached to the recognition are not fulfilled or cannot be fulfilled owing to the paucity of funds or some other reasons ; in many other cases, the University grants relaxation to many schools in respect of the conditions of recognitions. Nor has the University the requisite staff to enable it to be kept in constant or even regular and necessary touch with the 1,500 schools that seek or enjoy the privilege of presenting candidates at its Matriculation—so that the University remains in the dark as to what happens in these institutions or how they are being worked or how its directions are carried out. More than half of these schools are not in receipt of Government grants-in-aid and are not liable to inspection by the Government's inspecting staff ; even in the case of aided schools which are inspected by the Government Inspectors of School, the Department of Public Instruction which

sanctions these grants-in-aid, is not in a position to know directly what would be their requirements in connection with the Matriculation examination and naturally cannot enforce the requisite standard which the University (which conducts the Matriculation Examination) sets forth and demands but has no power or means of enforcing, in case of failure of the schools to maintain it. The University, thus, is placed in a very unnatural and unreal position in respect of its relation to the schools which seek recognition at its hands, in as much as it has neither the necessary funds to give financial assistance which is indispensably necessary for the efficient and the normal working of these very schools nor has it the requisite staff to keep itself in touch with, and give the timely guidance to, these institutions. The position could have been simplified to a great extent if the University had these necessary funds with which to enforce its standard and requirements or the proper staff to inspect, and give its guidance to, these institutions, at regular intervals. The crucial and pivotal point in this unhappy but intriguing situation is the Matriculation, or, as the Sadler Commission would have it, High School, Examination, for which the schools prepare their students, and through the channel of which the University draws its own students and various callings and professions, their recruits.

When, nearly a century ago, the University was entrusted with the task of conducting this examination which was and is still the first milestone in the student's life and served also as the first and initial gateway in his career, the situation in the country, and specially, in the sphere of education was simple and justified this course of action. But the situation in the country as well as in the field of education had changed considerably even in the later years of the last century, as with the crowding and overcrowding of the schools and colleges various

complicated factors arose. Quite a large number of the students going in for the University Entrance or Matriculation, cannot and, in many cases, should not continue in a further purely literary or academic career at the University ; some drift away ; some seek a technical training and practical courses and some cannot prosecute their studies any long and are compelled by necessity to try to earn a living. As the years roll by, the disparity between the number of the students appearing at the Matriculation—and even between the number of successful students—and the number of those pursuing academic courses at the University—in its constituent colleges—becomes larger and larger. It comes to this that under the changed conditions to-day the University, specially as it is constituted, an overwhelmingly official and stereotyped body, organically out of touch with the newer and powerful factors and the growing needs and tendencies in the country, cannot claim the fullest jurisdiction and exclusive control in the matter of such vital importance to the nation as a whole as the education leading up to the Matriculation (or the High School) Examination ; because this education is not, wholly, its own concern ; various other interests and factors are deeply concerned in it and should have a voice in regulating the progress, and shaping the character, of this education and must have some responsibility, along with the University, in working the system under which it is imparted and expanded and developed. The Matriculation, to-day, not only leads to the University, but also to various other educational courses and business and professional careers, for our young men ; and all these extra-university factors should have a representation on the authority which would conduct the Matriculation and fix up the courses of studies and make necessary rules and regulations for the purpose and decide which institutions should be allowed to present



candidates at this examination ; under no circumstances should the central representative authority—given the charge of running the entire system of secondary education—be weakened through divided control.

“A high school”, observes the Sadler Commission pertinently, “is by its nature necessarily more than a nursery to the University. It is part of the educational system of the country. It has an obligation to the whole community, and not merely to the boys it trains, or to the parents whose fees are paid to it. Private, or public, it cannot evade this evident obligation. The decision as to what it should teach is not legitimately governed by its own predilections alone, nor alone by the predilections of the parents, nor by the demands of the University alone. All these are indeed pertinent to the issue. But transcending them all, though not necessarily in conflict with them, is the interest of the community as a whole. The interest of the community is inseparably involved in the work of every school, and specially in that of schools which receive a formal recognition implying a guarantee of fitness for the work which they propose to do. The community, in safeguarding its interests, needs to look wider afield than to the entrance examination of the University alone. . .”

In these peculiar circumstances Dr. Sadler and his colleagues were justified in seeking a new synthesis of governing factors in the situation, which would not neglect any important interest but would take fullest advantage of all available experience and ability in the working the system of secondary education and in moulding its courses and its character in response to the needs of the nation and the spirit of the age. Extricated from its present unenviable and anomalous position in which it has to grant recognition to schools without the adequate means of enforcing its conditions, relieved of its tremendous responsibility of

conducting examinations on huge scales as at present, the University would be better able to concentrate its resources and energy on its own work, that of the highest teaching and research. But the Sadler Commission's reasons for transference of control in secondary education from the University and the Government Department to the new Board go deeper and are unassailable. "Education," they held, "however, important to the individual and therefore rightly adjusted to the individual requirements is also a matter of public concern and therefore calls for incessant re-adjustment to public needs. For this reason we have recommended the establishment of a Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education so representative in character as to reflect the needs of the community, but not so unwieldy in size as to be ineffective in the work of the administration. If such a representative Board is established, the experience of the University will find effective expression in its policy and administration. To such a Board we recommend that in future the responsibility of the University for the recognition of the schools should be transferred." As for the private and unaided schools, the Commission was strongly of opinion that the working of the system of secondary education in its entirety is of too great an importance to national life and social well-being for the very large number of these private and unaided schools to be excluded from the jurisdiction of the central authority, responsible for, and regulating, the working of the system. Not that the Commission was unmindful of the historical reasons which 'explain the extent of private enterprise in secondary education in Bengal'. "Private enterprise has in the past," said the Commission, "rendered great service to religion, to culture and to trade and is likely to prove of great value in the future. But it has never yet sufficed to meet all public needs. It can originate

a movement of educational ideas. It can protect the convictions of a minority. But it cannot supply a whole people with a system of schools. . .” This is the crux of the situation as it has developed in Bengal in the sphere of secondary education. Private enterprise and individual efforts, however glorious, have definite limits ; they cannot bring forth a net-work of schools efficient and thriving and covering the whole of Bengal ; the State, the academic and other important elements in society must come forward and combine in concerted, country-wide and sustained efforts in improving and in invigorating the worn-out system of secondary education, the quantitative expansion of which in its present form is the negation of real educational progress and destructive of the immense possibilities of cultural growth in Bengal. So all the different interests concerned in the proper functioning of the entire system of secondary education can only be reconciled and combined in a central representative Board ; with the resources provided by the State and, experience and ability, by the academic bodies including the University, it can, with the help of commercial and industrial concerns and support of public opinion, inaugurate a new era in secondary education in Bengal making it progressive and purposeful ; the urgent work of bringing the much needed succour to the hundreds of struggling and ‘unaided’ institutions and of opening up of newer and numerous avenues for the increasing stream of the educated unemployed to settle down in life, and thus of contributing to real national progress can only be taken up by such a Board.

But the conditions precedent to this consummation, to this new era of fruitfulness and planned progress in education in Bengal are these: in the first place all the institutions working under the system must come under the guidance and supervision of the Board ; secondly the

Board, would guarantee individual freedom of growth and development, and respect variety of type within the ample framework of its policy but without destroying the 'inspiring unity' in, and universality of, 'intellectual aim' which are essential to the success of educational mission ; lastly, the Board must be thoroughly representative ; thus only it can command the confidence of the principal elements and the important sections of the community concerned in the education and in the welfare of the country ; thus only can it claim the support of the State and the public opinion, and the fullest liberty of action consistent with academic ideal and social peace, and conducive to national prosperity.

There is not a weaker and darker spot in the whole structure of secondary education in Bengal, decaying and deteriorating as it has been so long, than the position and prospects of the large body of teachers in the majority of the schools ; here, again, the state of things is a legacy of the past ; but the conditions of service of these thousands of national workers dragging their miserable existence from year's end to year's end, labouring under the weight of constant care and want, and over-worked to the utmost, would be unthinkable in a western country ; naturally, the Sadler Commission's humane recommendations for the improvements of the pay and prospects of these poor teachers constitute a pivotal point in the whole scheme of reconstruction formulated by them. No scheme of reforms, no plan for the setting up of a competent authority to reform and regulate and remodel the decaying system of secondary education in Bengal will be worth the paper it will be written on, unless it aims at a radical change for the better in the dismal conditions of service in the majority of the schools ; unless it is calculated to infuse a new energy and vigour and a little sunshine and hope, into the lives of these thousands of teachers ; so that they might regain

their faith and strength—essentially necessary for the training up of the young—now drowned in the daily routine and constant worry. Nor need the main features of the Sadler Commission's scheme in this respect raise any controversy except on one point, as it aims at a salutary unification in, and levelling up of, the whole profession, at doing away with all artificial and invidious distinctions, and at providing better scope and opportunities for new talent and hard and earnest work.

But there was, as we have seen, no central authority to control and direct educational progress in Bengal. The policy of the State has always been not to recognise education as a major national obligation but practically to depend upon and encourage private efforts and enterprise in educational expansion ; naturally, there has been no proper planning and concerted action in the phenomenal quantitative development in response to the ever increasing demands for educational facilities all over the country.. The Government has played only a minor part in, and has been practically a silent spectator of, this striking expansion which has been worked out by private enterprise and individual efforts and sacrifice.

The rise of the hundreds of schools since the eighties of the last century has obeyed one law—the law of demand and supply ; there has been no steadying or correcting agency to keep this powerful movement of expansion from following an erratic course—not to speak of directing it into healthy and fruitful channels ; neither the Government with its high principles and lofty platitudes nor the public in spite of its zeal and intelligence were alive to the implications of the unplanned, ill-balanced growth ; so, there was nothing to lessen the rigours, and soften the operation, of this ruthless economic law of demand and supply in the academic field ; as a natural result of all this, we have

an appalling state of things in the conditions of recruitment and service in our secondary schools ; only, the disparity between the conditions of service in the Government, and private, schools bring out into greater prominence, the state of things reigning in the latter and exercise a pernicious influence over the whole system. As the Sadler Commission wrote, " . . . so poor are the salaries and prospects offered to teachers and so doubtful is the status of the teaching profession as a whole, that the calling fails to attract the necessary number of recruits possessing the ability and training which are required for the work of public education. In Bengal the widespread faith in education is in violent contrast to the disregard of the instrument by which alone education can achieve its aims. . . . . In the privately managed schools teaching posts are filled by the authorities of the schools on such conditions as to salary and tenure as they find sufficient to attract the kind of men they need or think adequate for their purpose. But the teachers have no security of tenure, there is no fixed salary scale—the salaries, as a rule, being so inadequate that most teachers have to resort to private coaching to eke out a livelihood—and at the end of their service, however long and faithful it might have been, the teachers cannot, as a rule, look forward to any pension or superannuation allowance. In Government schools, on the other hand, teachers are appointed, not by the governing body of the school, but by Government. They become members of one or other of the educational services. If their salaries are unduly low . . . they have at least security of tenure and the prospect of a pension. It is because of this security and of these prospects and the social distinction they reflect that Government service is mainly preferred. But it has its drawbacks. Promotion in a large heterogeneous service is generally by seniority, and therefore progress is necessarily

slow . . . this absence of prospects . . . combined with the unattractive salaries, undoubtedly debar many able young men from entering upon educational work. . .”

In these circumstances, the Sadler Commission very rightly urged the abolition of ‘the sharp cleavage’ not only between these two varieties of service—one in the private schools and the other in those under Government management—but also between these two types of schools. There should be much more elasticity in Government service, far greater prospects and better security in private institutions, and a living link between the two types of institutions, as also through all other institutions as they all would be brought under the control of, and kept in direct touch with, the central representative Board ; so that there would be possible a system of interchange of service from a Government, to a private, school and from one school to another, without breaking the continuity and length of the teachers’ service and without any loss of their pay or prospects. Under the present system this is not at all possible. The schools in their hundreds have grown up in their isolated independence, each working under the control of its own governing body, without any connecting link or living contact with the other ; they are suffered to live in their own grooves ; they thus act as so many scattered, disjointed loose units, and not as living thriving parts of an organic whole ; on the other hand these scattered units work under the same system, have the same immediate objective and are actuated practically by the same ultimate ideas and ideals. In these circumstances, in the interest of the smooth and harmonious working of the system, all these diverse, but not conflicting, units, working in their glorious isolation, must be unified, as they ought to be brought, under a central composite authority and must have uniform conditions of service and recruitment ; hence a

teacher entering the service of any one of the hundreds of institutions would not be bound—as at present—to spend all his life working there, in order to attain seniority and get the maximum benefit of provident fund—which amounts to not much in the end ; but he would have a vast field of work before him and he can transfer his service to any other institution, when the opportunity occurs—in any part of the country, without losing the benefit of his provident fund, without a break in his service ; just as the case is with the Government servants—and employees of mercantile firms too which have branch offices at different places—in their transfer from one place of service, or from one appointment, to another. It is not only the individuals that will be benefited but the institutions also, which will thus have the whole body of teaching or administrative staff working in all the institutions throughout the country to choose from, in case of a necessity or selection. The new system will thus bring in a welcome elasticity in the teaching profession and will ensure the necessary mobility of teaching power, which will benefit both the institutions and the teachers.

We had already seen that the purpose of the Government in establishing and maintaining schools—and colleges—was to run some institutions as models ; in pursuance of this policy every district—in Bengal—specially at its head quarter—was provided with a Government school and some, with a college to serve as models to private efforts and enterprise. But in one important respect, they finally failed ; even after half a century of service as models, they could not bring up the numerous sister institutions to their level as regards pay and prospects of the teachers working in the latter. The disparity between the pay and prospects of the staff in the Government institutions and those prevailing in institutions under private management remains as glaring to-day as in the last century ; on the other hand, there



cannot be much scope for individual talent and ability in 'a large and heterogeneous service'. "We are," wrote the Sadler Commission, "far from undervaluing the benefits which the system of Government service has brought to secondary education in Bengal and we realize the tenacity of the hold which the system has upon the public mind. . . We feel nevertheless that the system is in many respects inappropriate to school work, and, in its present form, an obstacle to proper co-ordination of the whole system." The new plan of recruitment and the conditions of service under the Board proposed by the Sadler Commission were calculated "to bring about the real unification of the teaching profession as a whole, and open to young teachers in all the schools, the prospect of a career such as might tempt men of ability into this vitally important sphere of public service." No doubt the whole question reduces itself in the long run to one of 'large expenditure upon salaries' of the teachers in the institutions, more specially under private management ; but as the Commissioners maintained, unless the present system is radically changed sweeping away the obnoxious distinction prevailing in the conditions of service in the Government, and non-Governmental, institutions, the much needed uniformity of tenure and unification of the teaching profession cannot be effected even if ample funds are available. Regard being had to all these facts, the Sadler Commission recommended the abandonment of both the methods of recruitment and of both the varieties of conditions of service—the one prevailing in the Government, and the other in non-Government, schools and intermediate colleges —and proposed new methods of recruitment and new conditions of service to be common to both types of institutions. In the first place, they urged that a 'minimum commencing salary (and if thought desirable, a regular rate of increment) should be fixed from time to

time for every post in the school or college, from the headmastership or principalship downwards'. In case of vacancy, 'all qualified persons, without distinction of race or of length of service' should be eligible. All members of the staff in an institution, should have, after their appointment, a 'written contract' ensuring security of tenure for a fixed period. There should be set up a tribunal appointed by Government to which an appeal would lie from any order of 'unfair dismissal or of breach of contract'. A teacher would not be liable to transfer unless he consents ; nor should he forego any of his rights attaching to an appointment in one institution but he should be free to try to obtain another anywhere else under the Board. The definite fixation of rates of salaries of all teachers, and written contracts showing terms of appointment must be the condition of recognition of all schools ; and the decision of the tribunal on an appeal from a teacher must be binding upon the governing body of the institution against the decision of which the appeal is preferred.

But the innovation suggested by the Commission in place of the present pension system obtaining in Government institutions will ensure a departure from the existing rigid conditions of service ; it will be welcomed by the whole body of the profession as it is calculated to confer a distinct boon on the teachers belonging to all recognised institutions in Bengal ; it will bring a great relief to their families, too. The existing pension system which is no doubt beneficial to a few members of the profession who have the good fortune to get posts in Government institutions and live up to the retiring age is not an unmixed blessing as it ties them for life to the Government service, unduly circumscribing the field of their work and denying them opportunities of working in other institutions where their talents and abilities might be shown to greater advantage.

The pension system, the Commission urged, should be replaced by the establishment of a Superannuation Fund, open to the entire body of the teaching profession under the Board ; the Commission proposed that it would be obligatory on the teachers belonging to the Government and aided institutions to be members of this Fund ; the teachers in the service of other recognised institutions having the option to join it, with the consent of the governing bodies concerned. The Government would of course have to contribute substantially, in the form of annual grants, to the Fund ; nor would the Government be a loser in the long run, as it will be relieved of its liabilities under the pension system in vogue. In case of Government and aided institutions, one of the conditions of service should be for the teachers, on appointment, to contribute 'a fixed percentage of their salary' to the Fund, the Board or the governing bodies of the latter institutions, contributing a greater amount ; incidentally, the Board might contribute a bigger percentage in their own institutions. All unaided institutions in the Presidency under the supervision of the Board should 'be entitled and encouraged to come into the scheme'. All contributions to the Fund should be made regularly to the Board which 'should be responsible for the investment and management of the Fund'. The scheme of superannuation, outlined by the Sadler Commission, would offer a teacher—on his being admitted to its membership immediately after his appointment to a post in any institution under the Board—"his choice between various kinds of benefit which would accrue to him on reaching the age fixed for retirement (*e.g.* an annual income for the rest of his life or a lump sum for investment)." Premature retirement after a fixed period of satisfactory service would entitle a teacher to 'a paid up policy maturing at a future date' or a proportionate payment, graded according to the length of

service, of the employer's contribution plus his own, with interest. Under this system, his transfer or appointment, from his original place of service, to another post in another place, would not adversely affect his rights in the superannuation scheme ; the amount accumulating to his credit in the Fund would continue to grow without any break wherever he might be posted, just as there should not occur any break in his service, in the case of his appointment from one institution to another ; for the simple reason that all the institutions would come under the Board, and hence, come into the scheme of the Fund worked by the Board ; specially as all the contributions to the Fund—those made by the employing institution as also by the teachers employed—would be paid to the Board in the name of the teachers concerned, and would continue to be so paid wherever the teachers might be employed, so long as they would work under the Board. This scheme would, doubtless, "secure," as the Sadler Commission hoped, "an improvement in the prospects of a very large number of teachers who are excluded from the advantages of the present pension system and will remove one of the chief barriers to the mobility of teaching power in Bengal. . . ." But the weakest point in this—in the circumstances—practically ideal scheme, is the unhappy clause in the Commission's recommendation, namely that unaided institutions under the Board, "should be entitled and encouraged to come into the scheme" ; if it is left to these schools and colleges—which out-number those aided, and directly run, by Government—to come into this highly beneficent scheme of superannuation, of their own option, it is likely that the majority of them would not do so on one ground or another ; in consequence, a very large number of the struggling, poverty-striven fraternity constituting an essential element of the nation-building service—probably those who would

stand mostly in need of the benefits of the scheme—would be left out of it. Thus the whole purpose of the scheme would be frustrated ; even the paramount necessity of a radical and thorough reformation and renovation of the system of secondary education which are long and seriously overdue would remain unfulfilled if the lot of a very large body of poor, helpless workers in the system, is not considerably improved ; all prospect of reform would be a vain delusion if better provisions be not made for the teachers and more attractive and tolerable prospects are not held out before the young men of ambition and ability, to re-enforce and invigorate the old and anæmic system. The much needed ‘mobility of teaching power’ would be a far off reality and ‘the inelasticity of the existing system’ which holds in an iron grip practically the whole body of the over-worked and ill-paid profession essentially necessary to the national life and progress, would not be got ‘rid of’, as the Commission hoped ; we can only hope that in any future scheme of reorganization and reconstruction—which will have to be undertaken sooner or later—no section, no part of the essential national service, should be left out ; if the benefits of any reform go only to some, and are denied to others, it will prove fatal to the success of that or any other scheme of educational reform, jeopardise the chances of the harmonious working of the whole system, and destroy the big possibilities of educational development and fruitfulness, in Bengal.

As we have just said, the Sadler Commission’s constructive proposals for the betterment and the reorganization of the entire teaching profession in the secondary stage would be welcomed by all if only their scheme is not restricted, in its operation, to any particular sections of the professions or classes of institutions but applies to all institutions and

all teachers in its beneficial effects. But there will be a good deal of disagreement, and even controversy, with regard to the Commission's proposals for the creation of what they called a 'head quarter corps', a special corps, of teachers—a regular body of teachers and not some individuals thrown in here and there, mainly European, but not excluding Indian, with qualifications and experience acquired in Europe and America. The Commission, however, was quite definite on the important point that no posts should be reserved for members of such corps ; nor could they claim as a matter of right a superiority or precedence over the members of general body of teachers ; they would, of course, be given increased and special pay and emoluments in view of the fact that they would be brought out from Europe to serve in a distant foreign country or, in the case of Indians, in order to compensate, to some extent, the trouble and expenditure incurred in obtaining foreign experience and qualifications. "We recommend therefore," the Commission wrote, "the creation of a special corps of teachers, to be appointed on the express ground that (whether themselves Indians or Europeans) they can make a contribution of special value to the educational methods of Bengal owing to their training in, and experience of, the educational methods of other countries. Some of them might be appointed for a short term, others for the whole duration of their working life. The rates of pay and (if necessary) of pension should be fixed in each case in view of the kind of man or woman desired. . . . What is wanted is the greatest possible elasticity ; and this means a freedom in fixing the salary and conditions for any particular appointment such as no formal service system would permit. The work to be done by members of the special corps would be fixed by the Board. Many of them would be employed in teaching English, or the methods of teaching, or some

more neglected sciences, like zoology, in the intermediate colleges. They might, in special cases, act as headmasters or principals, though this would not be a matter of right. Yet others might be lent to privately managed schools or intermediate colleges . . . others might pass from one intermediate college to another, spending a short time in each. Yet others might be called upon to act as inspectors, or to take part in the examination of schools. We believe that a body of this kind is essential if the reorganization of secondary and higher secondary education in Bengal is to be effectively carried out. . . .” If we find ourselves unable to lay the same degree of emphasis on, or feel the necessity of, a corps like this, as the Sadler Commission did, it is not because of any prejudice based on colour or creed. The temple of learning should be the last place to have scope for any such prejudice ; a nation, to be alive and thriving and to have a vigorous and fruitful life, cannot shut its door to foreign scholarship or culture but must try to assimilate in its life and heritage all that is best and noblest in foreign civilization and progress. But it is quite a different thing to reserve an important, and necessarily, a costly, place for what would amount to be a foreign cadre—though elastically organized—in the nation’s vital service of teachers in the secondary stage. Surely foreign scholarship and exponents of foreign civilization and culture would have a more fitting place in the sphere of higher and highest teaching, in the portals of a cosmopolitan university like Calcutta’s than in the restricted sphere of secondary education ; proficiency in educational methods, and acquaintance with academic life, in advanced foreign lands, might have, of course, a place in the new educational system in Bengal. But the creation of a definite ‘body of teachers imported from the West’—though on fair and elastic terms—will not be acquiesced in by the public opinion in

Bengal. Nevertheless the contact with the academic life in the West should be surely maintained. Some European scholars with a new outlook and urge might still work in the new system ; and a few Indians serving in the reorganized system of secondary education might go, and be even sent, to the West for training in western educational methods and for acquiring western experience and qualifications so that the educational system in Bengal would not be cut off from, but would keep itself abreast of, the progress and excellence achieved in the educational world in the West. With her intense and at times, irresistible nationalism Bengal to-day has risen above the narrowness of the usual parochial patriotism in her highest academic sphere and in her vigorous intellectual life and her culture ; without cutting herself adrift from her ancient moorings, she is enriching herself with the culture of the world ; and in her highest tendencies she is moving towards, and working for, a synthesis of world's culture which the humanity stands in the greatest need of. But few in Bengal will agree that 'a body of teachers imported from the West' and appointed on special but elastic terms, is 'essential' to the work of 'reorganization of secondary and higher' education here. With English ceasing to be the medium of instruction in Bengal in the secondary stage, one of the main reasons for the creation of this special corps has disappeared ; besides, the expenses on this head will be too great for any future Board, in view of the demands upon its limited resources for reorganizations in various quarters ; so in any future reconstruction Bengal will have to do without this special corps of teachers.

The Sadler Commission was quite sanguine about the effects their recommendations would have on the career of a capable young man in the service of their Board. "A young man," they wrote, "might begin his work in a privately



managed school, encouraged to accept a low salary and a small contribution to his superannuation fund by the knowledge that various openings would offer later. He does good work ; on the strength of which he is appointed to a post in one of Board's schools, with a better salary and a consequent increase in the rate at which his superannuation fund grows. If he feels tempted to leave scholastic work, he can take with him a paid-up policy which will mature at a future date or he can withdraw his own superannuation contribution with compound interest—a useful nest-egg. But if he goes on with educational work, he may possibly be invited to accept the headmastership of a private school which needs reorganization, at a higher salary. His superannuation fund therefore grows more rapidly. With his varied experience he may be able to bring about a great improvement of his school ; an improvement so marked that he may be asked (for example) to take charge of the training of teachers in an intermediate college. From that he may pass to be an inspector or examiner of schools ; he may return to one of the intermediate colleges as principal ; if he has done scholarly work, he may be elected to a chair in one of the universities ; if his strength is on the administrative side, he may rise to be Director of Public Instruction. A career is open to him ; a career such as is now impossible for a Bengali youth of ambition and ability who undertakes educational work." Too rosy a prospect, this, undoubtedly ; but all schemes of educational reform must aim at making it a reality so that a new era might dawn in the academic life in Bengal.



# PART IV

## THE NEEDS OF THE NEW AGE

### EVOLUTION OF NEWER AIMS AND IDEALS IN EDUCATION AND A NEWER SYNTHESIS IN CULTURE



## CHAPTER XII

### THE NEED FOR NEWER AIMS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF CULTURES UPON THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Need for newer aims and ideals and a new synthesis—Sadler Commission's conception of the character and function of the 'new education' planned by them in the secondary stage—Government of India's failure to give a practical turn and pursue a forward policy ; their Despatch to the Secretary of State in 1915—Pandit Malaviya's emphasis on 'commercial education' in 1911 ; his Note of Dissent to the Report of the Industrial Commission—The need for academic re-adjustment—Statutory Commission's views—Bengal's loss of her former ascendancy in India—Indications of a decline in Bengali character and culture ; failure in competitive examinations ; rise of lighter 'literature' ; lighter tastes and habits—Sadler Commission's unique tribute to Bengal's linguistic genius, their estimate of Bengali students' character and of the effects of the conflict of cultures on their mind—The problem of creating a spiritual basis of education—Sadler Commission's indictment of 'the schools' for the want of 'spiritual life' ; their views on the 'lack of an inspiring unity and synthesis' in the western education and culture—Tagore's striking review of Progress in the West—The collapse of civilization in Europe and failure of culture in India due to the failure of the mission of education for this lack of unity and aim and synthesis.

As we have already pointed out—at the conclusion of Chapter X—the problem that confronts us in Bengal, and in India, too, is not simply a mechanical and isolated re-organization of the educational system ; nor is it solely an academic adjustment and adaptation ; but the problem ultimately reduces itself to one of evolution and working of a healthier, truer, and a really dynamic synthesis in the

chaos of conflicting ideas, of the installation of 'an inspiring unity in intellectual aim' and the resolution of the spiritual crisis, in education brought about by the play of extra-academic factors—and in India, by the academic, too ; and this crisis can only be resolved in the harmonization of the intellectual aim and cultural progress with the spiritual purpose and principle in life. "Towards some (such) new synthesis . . . human thought may be moving. But such a synthesis has not yet been reached . . .," truly said Dr. Sadler and his colleagues. But before Education—and Culture—can meet this higher necessity and demand of life in modern age, in the resolution of the inner conflict and crisis and in the reigning of the 'inspiring unity' and of the reconciliation of the intellectual and cultural aim, and moral principle and spiritual purpose, in life, education has got to be planned and worked with infinite care and earnestness ; and in Bengal it has got to be rejuvenated from its fatal anæmia and enlivened and invigorated with the urge of the Ideal of enlightened nationalism and humanity—the ideal of human unity' which, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness'. But in Bengal, the situation is too serious and complicated owing to the chokeage of her academic life and the silting up of the mainsprings of her cultural and intellectual vitality, thanks to the diseased working of the 'exotic' educational and political systems ; the first requisite, even in these distressing circumstances, is the clarification of the educational aims and the crystallization of the conception of education itself in the light of the paramount Ideal it must follow. Here again we have to be grateful to the Sadler Commission for giving us a clear idea of the character of education that ought to follow the normal working of the system after it has been reorganised and reconstructed on the lines suggested by them.

It will, therefore, be interesting to note what their ideas were about this education. "Such 'an education," they wrote, "should be given under conditions favourable to the health of the pupils. Their bodies should be developed and trained by systematic and vigorous exercise. Their eyes should be trained to see, their ears to hear, with quick and sure discrimination. Their sense of beauty should be awakened, and they should be taught to express it by music and by movement, and through line and colour. Their hands should be trained to skilful use. Their will should be kindled by an ideal and hardened by a discipline enjoining self-control. They should learn to express themselves accurately and simply in their mother tongue, and in India, in English also. Through mathematics they should learn the relations of forms and numbers. Through history and literature, they should learn something of the records of the past ; what the human race (and not the least their fellow countrymen) have achieved ; and how the great poets and sages have interpreted the experience of life. Their education should further demand from them some study of nature and should set them in the way of realizing both the amount and quality of evidence which a valid induction requires. Besides this, it should open windows in their mind, so that they may see wide perspectives of history and of human thought. But it should also, by the enforcement of accuracy and steady work, teach them by what toil and patience men have to make their way along the road to truth. Above all, the education should endeavour to give them by such methods and influences as it is free to use, a sure hold upon the principles of right and wrong and should teach them to apply those principles in their conduct. Thus its chief work is to enlighten and practise the conscience, both the moral conscience and the intellectual. And, through the activities

of corporate life in the school, it should give the pupils experience in bearing responsibility, in organization, and in working with others for public ends, whether in leadership or in submission to the common will. . . .”

Varied educational opportunities and new facilities for training required for the various professions would naturally follow a true delimitation of the province of the University and secondary stage in education, and the working of the new intermediate colleges evenly distributed throughout Bengal ; these, the Commission was rather sanguine, should turn to better and much more profitable use the immense intellectual activities as well as energies and resources of the country now wasted or running into unfruitful, and even ‘dangerous channels’, in the stereotyped courses and in vain efforts to find a footing or bare living. “The establishment of the system of intermediate colleges,” they wrote, “. . . would furnish Bengal for the first time with opportunities of higher secondary education adapted to the needs of industry, commerce and agriculture as well as of professional callings, and would increase the wealth of the Presidency by enhancing the intellectual vigour of the elite of the rising generation and their power of initiative. It would thus in due time lessen the burden of poverty which now weighs upon the educated classes. Prospects of well-paid and responsible employment would improve. The congestion caused by the concentration of ability upon a too restricted number of careers would be relieved. The mischief which is being done by unsuitable form of teaching and by a not less unsuitable method of examination would be checked at one of the most critical points in a student’s course.” Nor was the Sadler Commission alone in urging for, “and emphasising the necessity of, a change in the too literary and stereotyped courses of study followed by the very large number of our under-graduates after passing the Matricula-



tion. It is a well-known fact that the Government of India themselves were not unaware of the dangerous situation in the sphere of education that was fast worsening and going out of control, owing mainly to the colossal blunder of keeping the ever expanding educational system—specially at the higher stages—within narrow, unprofitable and dangerous limits ; it cannot but lead to blasted hopes, and swell educated unemployment and drive under-ground deep discontent. They had no justification to be impervious to the incessant call and the crying necessity of the age—the necessity of giving a practical turn to their educational policy and of pursuing a national, forward policy in the sphere of education, in place of the time honoured lukewarm attitude that they had been taking so long. In the course of a Despatch to the Secretary of State dated the 26th November, 1915, the Government of India said, “. . . It is becoming increasingly clear that a definite and self-conscious policy of improving the industrial capabilities of India will have to be pursued after the war, unless she is to become more and more a dumping ground for the manufactures of foreign nations who will be competing the more keenly for markets, the more it becomes apparent that the political future of the larger nations depends on their economic positions. The attitude of the Indian public towards this important question is unanimous and cannot be left out of account.” They emphasised “the need for an industrial policy which will lighten the pressure on purely literary courses and reduce the excessive demand for employment in the services and callings to which these courses lead up.”

As we had already said, not only the Government but the better mind of the people, even in the pre-War period, was awakening to the growing need for a reorientation in the educational policy and for

diverting the ever increasing eagerness of the people—specially in Bengal—for educational opportunities, and their enthusiasm for educational progress into the really fruitful and healthy and natural channels ; the necessity of breaking new ground, and of leaving the beaten track, in the vast field of education, engaged the attention of the thinking sections of the public for a long time ; and the importance of technical and commercial education to the national progress and prosperity had been realized even before the Calcutta University and Industrial Commissions laboured and reported. So far back as 1911 Pandit Malaviya wrote “. . . The importance of commercial education is now fully recognised in the advanced countries of the West. Those nations of the West which are foremost in the commerce of the world have devoted the greatest attention to commercial education. Germany was the first to recognise the necessity and usefulness of this kind of education. America followed suit ; so did Japan ; and during the last fifteen years, England has fully made up its deficiency in institutions for commercial education . . . Prof. Leess Smith who came to India two years ago at the invitation of the Government of Bombay . . . said . . . ‘The leaders of commerce and business need to be trained just as a doctor or a barrister or professional man. . . Modern experience shows us that business requires administrative capacity of the highest type.’ When it is remembered that the export and import trade of India totals up more than 300 millions every year, it can easily be imagined what an amount of employment can be found for our young men in the various branches of commerce, in and out of the country, if satisfactory arrangements can be made to impart to them the necessary business education and training. Here also the experience and practice of Japan afford us guidance and advice. . . Formerly it was held that no advanced educa-

tion was needed for a merchant! But to-day stern reality shows that measurement of any large-scale enterprise must be undertaken only by the educated. . . .”

In the course of his famous Minute of Dissent to the Report of the Indian Industrial Commission Pandit Malaviya wrote . . . . “England has made a great deal of provision since then for imparting technical and scientific education in her schools, colleges and universities. . . It is this which has enabled England to maintain her high position and to keep up her industrial eminence. It is this which has enabled her to fight the splendid fight she has fought in this war. . . And yet as the reports of various departmental committees of ‘the Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy after the War’ show, the wisdom and experience of England are loudly calling for ‘widespread and far-reaching changes in respect of primary and secondary education and apprenticeship’, and for ‘better technical and art education’ for her people in order that her industrial position after the war may be quite secure. Our education to-day is in many respects nearly in as bad a condition as was England’s in 1869. . . . The commercial war which has been going on will become much keener after the War. India will be much more exposed to the competition of nations which have built up their industries upon a widespread and comprehensive system of technical education. In this category, come not only the nations of Europe and America but also Japan. It is clearly established that the development of Japanese industries has been built up on ‘a system of technical education which included everything required to enable her to occupy her proper place among the manufacturing nations of the world.’” If the industries of India are to develop, and the Indians, to have a fair chance in the competition to which they are exposed, it is essential that a system of

education at least as good as that of Japan should be introduced in India. . .''

We might seem to lay too great an emphasis on what might appear to be the extra-academic aspect of educational expansion in our midst. But the imminent peril that stares us in the face in India, in Bengal particularly, in the vast field of education, specially at the end of high school and university courses, will not be averted simply by an academic re-adjustment, important as it surely is, but by a quick process of a thorough reform' in our educational system, by remodelling and re-ordering our secondary education so as to bring it into closer relations, and more fruitful contact, with the new and more powerful factors in life ; to ignore these dominant factors in the modern world, to fly in the face of these stern realities of life, the political, economic and social, necessities of our age and country, in the sphere of education is to run counter to the basic law of social well-being and national progress, which demands that 'it (education) must be adjusted and continually re-adjusted to the manifold needs of the different individuals, and to the needs of the community for the service of which the individual is trained'. An educational system which suffers from an incorrigible obsession for barren academic tradition and restricts itself within the narrow groove of purely academic curriculum unrelated to the actualities of life cuts at the root of cultural efflorescence and moral and material uplift ; in the end it must, as it unhappily happens in Bengal, fail to build up a virile and vigorous and enlightened manhood and womanhood—simply because it renders itself incapable of 'incessant re-adjustment to public needs'.

As regards secondary education it is perfectly true that, 'The whole community is concerned in the work of the secondary schools, as upon their excellence its general welfare

depends to a considerable degree.' Hence there can never be an ideal, excellence, or academic perfection in the aim of secondary education, unrelated to the paramount necessities of the age and the crying needs of the 'whole community' ; secondary education which does not aim at, and work for—as ours has failed to do—the 'general welfare' of the whole community, is a costly sham and an empty and alluring mirage. As the Statutory Commission of 1927 remarked reviewing the educational survey of their Auxiliary (Education) Committee, ". . . The problems of secondary education are mainly the problems of organizations ; and on their solution depends, in very large measure the value of the contribution which the universities will make to the social and political strength of the country. University standards are bound to react upon the standard of secondary education and there is a very general agreement that in India this reaction has been and is excessive and in many respects detrimental. But only good foundation for a university system which will be fruitful in the social, political and intellectual life of the people, is a sound and healthy system of secondary education, and shortcomings in that system are in the long run certain to bring with them failure in the higher ranges of education. . . ." Herein lies the great, and in a sense unique importance of a widespread system of sound secondary education, liberal in outlook and catholic in its spirit, not rigidly bound to a narrow academic curriculum, unrelated to the paramount problems of the nation and thus divorced from the realities of life ; it holds the key to happy fruitfulness in the social, political and intellectual spheres of national life but it must be adapted to the various requirements of this life to make it rich and buoyant, healthy and purposeful. All the flourishing, progressive nations in the West and even in the East, had long awakened to the inevitable necessity of, and had properly

carried out the much needed, re-ordering and re-modelling of their educational system so that it can, in unison with the spirit and necessities of the age, effectively contribute to the 'welfare of the whole community' ; will India, will Bengal, which had taken to western education and culture enthusiastically and has taken her place among the rising nations of the world, lag behind and fail to reform and renovate her educational system in the face of imminent peril?

There has, of late, been one aspect, or rather out-come, of the working of the system of education in Bengal—in which the secondary stage is not less, but probably more, involved than the University, as the former practically supplies the foundation of the latter—which has attracted serious public attention ; the question goes to the root of Bengal's century-old cultural and intellectual ascendancy in modern India and in the modern age. The pre-eminence that Bengal has been enjoying, not only within India but outside it, in the realm of science and literature, of arts and philosophy, the pre-eminent position that Bengal has been occupying in the India of to-day by dint of her unique mastery of western education and culture, of western science and methods is not exactly forsaking her ; because, no doubt, this pre-eminence is particularly due to, and has been won for her by, some of her pre-eminent sons, some of her exceptionally gifted intellectuals ; thanks to God, the source of this pre-eminence, the main springs of the outstanding genius supporting it have, by no means, dried up ; scarcely any decade has come and gone, ever since India—and Bengal too—has risen from her century-old stupor and found her creative genius—her immortal spirit—expressing itself in remarkable intellectual and spiritual activities, without some pre-eminent personalities, some brilliant figures contributing to, and enriching, her cultural

life and progress. But of late, the questions have cropped up, whether Bengal is still maintaining her former lead, her accustomed level of intellectual and even cultural excellence in an India which is fully awake and thriving and throbbing with a new life and energy from one end of the country to the other? Whether in the race that has now been joined by various communities all over India, Bengal is not lagging behind? Whether the common products, the average outturn of her University—and in this category will be included the vast mass of her Matriculates and undergraduates—does not suffer by comparison with, and go under as they are pitted against, the similarly educated youths from other parts of the country? And if it is really so, something must be very wrong either with the younger generation or with the machinery, the system of education, through which it passes out.

It would be going beyond the scope of our limited study to try to deal, at any length, with this question which is agitating the public mind, of late. But we might refer to one or two facts about which there would be little controversy but which have bearing on it. It is a fact—which is staring us in the face—that in recent years Bengali graduates and under-graduates are not able to maintain their traditional position, to hold their own against their young competitors from other parts of India in the open competitive examinations held mainly for the purpose of recruitment to various public services. Either in the highest service, the Civil Service or in the service at the lowest rung of the ladder in Government offices not only has Bengal lost her position of pre-eminence but also the percentage of success is sometimes lower than that of other province or provinces. In the examinations held in England or in India, Bengali boys and youths do not come out with such flying colours as they, rather their

predecessors, did a generation or two ago ; again even in some of the services—such as, for instance, the Accounts and Audit Service, the Civil Service and the Medical Service—the top places of which were, in a sense, her accustomed monopoly, her place of honour is fast receding from her hold. But this loss of old pre-eminence might be, and to some extent is, due to the awakening of the dormant talent and sleeping genius in the intellectuals hailing from other parts of India, who have joined the race lately, but with all the alertness and alacrity of the young ; it is natural that the latter, with the irresistible enthusiasm and energy, characteristic of the new-comers would overtake and even oust their older rivals and pioneers who might be inclined to rest on their oars ; the regrettable, incontrovertible fact, however, remains that the average of Bengal's success compares unfavourably with that of other provinces ; even the proportion of quantitative success achieved by Bengal is less than what it should be, regard being had to the numbers from Bengal and other provinces appearing at the examinations. Why should the average of Bengal's success be lower than that of other provinces? This lower average, and smaller proportion, of Bengal's success cannot be explained except by the assumption that there has been a fall in, a lowering of, the qualifications of the average products of the University.

We are, of course, not dealing with the bigger, and the very controversial, question of the decline of the Bengali race, or of the deterioration of the Bengali intellect—specially in the young ; nor with the comparative loss of her old pre-eminence in various fields of life, which might not, after all, be fully due to the loss of her own intrinsic quality in the select few. But the average record of her intelligent young men particularly when they are confronted with the young men from other parts of India in the public



examination, in public offices or business, is not as satisfactory as it was before and point either to a deterioration of the quality or of the equipments of the young. Other signs are not wanting which might indicate, it might be temporarily, a lowering of the intellectual and cultural level attained by the younger generation. One of these is the ever increasing stream of what is erroneously called lighter literature purporting to depict, in indifferent manner, the sensational as well as the sordid, the unreal and the improbable in life with the external glimmer of a realistic touch—and for this very reason fascinating and appealing to the undeveloped mass mind, with all the allurements of the wistful unattainable; every day it is getting a firmer and firmer hold on the young, to the exclusion of serious literature which depicts the real and the true in life—the massive, unrecognised, intrinsic quality and unredeemed character crushed with ‘the arrows of an outrageous fortune’, the age-long suffering, the unmeaning agony, the terrible turmoil and ceaseless toil, the cruel struggle and the unrelenting and absurd fate, which it is the tragedy of humanity to meet in life. Nor are history, biography, science, philosophy and mathematics—to name some of the serious subjects which no nation, surely not its younger generation, can ignore or fail to be deeply interested in, if it cares for a place in the sun,—are any the more popular. The conclusion, thus, seems to be irresistible that even if the high water mark of intellectual achievement and excellence is retained, to some extent, thanks to some rare spirits in Bengal, the general cultural level and intellectual calibre of the young, as reflected in this lighter literature, these lighter tastes and habits of, this refraining from the hard and serious side of life by, the younger generation, have suffered a fall, at any rate, a temporary fall; fortunately, we have ample and unimpeachable evidence that this deterioration in the

intellectual level is not due to any 'decline or dearth of the intrinsic quality in the young who are receiving their education in the University or in the secondary schools, with whom we are now directly concerned.

The Calcutta University Commission dwelt, with their characteristic impartiality and thoroughness, with this aspect of the big educational problem in Bengal and recorded their conclusions in no uncertain terms, after interrogating a very large number of intelligent and well-posted correspondants and witnesses and after making the most searching investigation of the question. "All who know him," writes the Commission in the course of their discourse on 'The Students in Bengal', "will attribute to the Bengali a full share of the 'keen intelligence and apt capabilities' upon which the King-Emperor based the expectations disclosed in his Proclamation to the Princes and people of India in November 1908. . . And, lastly, as no single generation lives to itself alone but finds its freedom of development affected by the habits of mind and fixed preferences of its seniors, we must remember that young Bengal has to adjust many of its new thoughts and aspirations to the social tenets of older generation. . . If a general inventory be taken of his powers and disabilities the Indian boy living in Bengal will be found to come up to a good average, when he is compared with his like in other countries. . . To begin with the physical basis of his mental powers, he has, as a rule, a very retentive memory and good powers of hearing. The ear and the memory have, between them, furnished the chief physical basis for the traditional learning of Bengal . . . nevertheless the mastery of English tongue possessed by so large a number of educated Bengalis only fails to excite admiration because it has become familiar through everyday's experience. A people must possess great linguistic capacity to have achieved such high level of

customary skill. Where else in the world but in India could so many writers have been found able to express their opinion through foreign medium, with lucid (and in some cases with eloquence' and high distinction of style) upon the intricate and many-sided problems raised in our questionnaire? After every allowance is made for the incentive to the study of English . . . this mastery of a foreign tongue gives proof of high linguistic power. . . . Yet prone as he is to slur over differences in point of time, the Bengali student has a brilliant capacity for drawing other kinds of distinction. This gift stands him in good stead in the practice of law, provided that in exercising it he does not indulge himself to the point of becoming tedious and unconvincing. Often in logic and in metaphysics, he shows a considerable power of acute analysis. He has also a love for abstraction and generalisation, a love sometimes displayed to excess but springing from qualities of mind which might achieve grandeur of conception when playing upon rich masses of observed and assimilated fact. For such assimilation of fact the Bengali student has excellent equipment by reason of his quickly assimilating power. To any new ideas which appeal to his sympathies, to any new fashions of thoughts for which he feels affinity, his mind naturally and quickly adheres. First of all Indians, the Bengali appropriated western learning. He has been, of all Indians, the quickest in adopting western culture. And this quality of the Bengali's mind and temperament is connected with his power of imaginative sympathy. His quick sympathy gives him insight ; his insight, the desire for assimilation. Dr. Brajendranath Seal records in his evidence the quickening of intellectual interests which he has observed among many of the university students during the last triennium. And we find that in Calcutta, as in London and Paris, the more eager minds among the

undergraduates are now pre-occupied with those books in which are debated, whether in fiction or in philosophy, in poetry or in drama, the poignant issues of contemporary life. . . ."

Much has been, and is being, said of the manifest aversion of Bengali boys and youths to a hard life, to a life of onerous work and severe discipline ; instances are not rare in which they have proved a failure, or gone under, in those avocations in life which call for more than ordinary hardship and sustained physical, and even manual, labour and skill ; probably failure, in these numerous cases, has been due, more often to a lack of earnestness of purpose and sincerity of acceptance than to any fundamental defect in the Bengali character—more often to a faulty temperament than to a growing weakness in his nature. We have just to cite the considered opinions of two very competent and independent authorities, which should bear us out and ought to be a source of encouragement to the weaker spirits and faltering hands amongst us, when confronted with heavy, onerous and tedious work in life. Brigadier-General Strange who was in charge of training of the Calcutta University Corps—of Bengali boys in the University under military training—in 1917-18 expressed himself thus. . . . "The men showed marked adaptibility to military training, and they learnt their manual exercises with surprising rapidity. They displayed great steadiness in the ranks, and discipline was good. . . . The standard of shooting was good, considering the lack of experience and the short time available for preliminary practice. The men promoted to temporary non-commissioned ranks showed considerable ability and developed a good word of command. I consider these men show great promise. I was certainly surprised at the rapid progress made. They had British officers and non-commissioned officers as instructors with whom they

got on excellently. . . I think the most valuable lesson they learned was discipline. . .”

Nor is the testimony of the other gentleman less interesting and weighty. “. . . The point I particularly wish to press,” said Mr. C. F. Payne, Chairman of the Corporation of Calcutta, in the course of a memorandum to the Commission, “is the readiness of Indian young men (that is Bengali young men) now-a-days to undergo the practical training which is the necessary accompaniment of any useful form of technical education. It is frequently urged that technical education has not succeeded in India because of the unwillingness of Indians to undergo this practical training, and probably past experience has given some ground for this belief. I am strongly of opinion, however, . . . that at least in Calcutta and elsewhere in Bengal, there is a large number of young men who are only looking for the opportunity to fit themselves for some trade or profession in which practical training is required, and who would willingly undergo that training if it were available . . . I have seen a good deal of the practical work of Bengalis in the Engineering Department of the Calcutta Corporation who have been trained at Sibpur ; and generally speaking, I find that they are by no means unready to ‘take off their coats’ and tackle a job of work. Given adequate facilities for training in other trades and professions in which technical education is necessary, I do not think that there is any doubt that the Indian (also Bengali) young men would show aptitude in those directions as well. At present there are no opportunities open to them, and I am confident that it is lack of opportunity rather than the disinclination to manual labour which stands in the way of the economic progress of Bengal. .” But we have no intention of drawing too delightful, and too colourful a picture of the Bengali youth or to slur over his undoubted

and serious defects that really stand in the way of his success in life, after he has passed through, and completed, the academic courses and training, whatever their character might be.

It is the business of the educationists and educational institutions to cure him of these defects which hamper his progress in life ; to ignore or explain away these defects will do him no good whatsoever. Apart, however, from his natural or temperamental weaknesses or even environmental handicaps, he suffers from the defects of his virtues. His very emotionalism, the keenness of his responsive nature, depth and openness of his sympathy often land him in no little trouble and really act as impediments in the formation of a strong character and stubborn personality which, again, are great assets in the storm and stress of life one has to go through ; naturally, he has to face it ill-equipped, so that he is much more exposed to the pit-falls and dangers lurking in life, than are the stronger and rougher spirits. As the Calcutta University Commission truly said, “. . . Nevertheless, in any such sympathetic open-mindedness to new ideas and ideals there is a danger of instability. Vivid impressions may be overwashed by new impressions, not less vivid than those which went before. Thus the Bengali student's very gift of sympathy exposes him to the danger of instability of mind. He may feel in rapid succession new intellectual interests, new objects of desire, the attractions of new points of view, each in turn distractingly modified by that which follows. And it is perhaps to this trait in his temperament that is due his lack of endurance in working his way with stubborn, undeflected purpose through the granite of a difficult subject. . . Yet capable as he is of concerted effort under the duress of an idea, the Bengali student is judged by some of his fellow countrymen who have made life-long

study of his powers to be deficient in the capacity for complex co-ordination, whether in the sphere of thought or of action. These observers detect in him a certain degree of weakness in the grasp of complex factors, in their adjustment to one another and in keeping them in equilibrium, be it in the study of a complicated intellectual problem or in the maintenance of an organization. This defect is one of the impediments to the progress of the Bengali not only (though there are conspicuous exceptions) in the study of such subjects as sociology and economics, but also in complex industrial undertakings, in the wide but too much neglected field of municipal enterprise, and in the responsible duties of commercial management upon a large scale. To find a cure for this defect, partly by means of changes in education, partly in other ways is a most difficult problem. . . .”

But, unfortunately, this weakness in his intellectual equipments, this serious defect in his mental outlook and balance, his early training either at home or at the primary school—more particularly his education in the adolescent period—during the formative years of his early youth does very little to counteract ; we might leave aside the primary stage, as being outside our scope ; but are the long years spent in the secondary, and even university, stages, any the more fruitful and happy? are these important years in his life helpful in contributing to the formation of a character and building up of a manhood, strong and sturdy, buoyant and self-reliant, courageous and cool in the face of danger, and not afraid either of hard work or hard fate? Let us have the opinion of Dr. Sadler and his colleagues on this significant point. . . . “At the high school,” they wrote, “the uninspiring routine continues to run its course. There is little of individual stimulus, and practically none of the interests and discipline of corporate life. The

course of study is narrow, the methods of teaching, perfunctory and dull. Too little is done, save by exceptional teachers, to rouse the boy's interests, to train his powers of observation, to impart to him the habit of independent study, to give him the first lessons of practical experience in managing the affairs which arise in the social life of any community, even in the community of a school. . .'' All these deplorable consequences of the unplanned educational expansion, all these serious defects in the intellectual and moral equipments of the younger generation, all these devitalizing tendencies in its culture point to the need of newer and truer aims in education, specially in the secondary stage.

We do not think we can finish our present study without dealing with the great spiritual and cultural conflict, the conflict of ideals and ideologies under the impact of which the Indian, and the Bengali, student often bends down and loses his ground. The inevitable conflict of cultures, and clashing of ideals, old and new, the tremendous impact of the aggressive, materialistic civilization of Europe upon the placid bywaters of his life in his early youth and boyhood, go a long way to spoil the harmonizing, steadying and cementing influences of his own traditional culture, without fully or properly sustaining him with the strength and beauty of the foreign (culture). He is easily, all the more easily, swept off his feet and finds himself—when it is too late—quite beyond his depths, carried away, in the words of Dr. Sadler and his colleagues, "by the eddying current of western thought, which is forcing its way, in some degree unseen, into the quiet waters of his traditional life. . . It is through the contact between Indian culture and that of the outer world, and specially the culture of Europe and the West, that painful dilemmas are created" in his mind. But our schools and colleges, working as they do in their



own their barren, stereotyped courses, moving in their own narrow grooves, without any intimate touch, and healthy and salutary contact with, their students, are no help to them in freeing their impressionable minds, from the difficulties and dangers caused by the effects of this conflict of ideals and impact of a brilliant foreign culture which has itself to find an essential unity and indispensable synthesis. "The Bengali student," truly said Dr. Sadler's Commission, "like many a student in other lands, feels upon his mind the pooh of two loyalties, the loyalty to the old order and the loyalty to the new. But in his case the difficulty of combining these two loyalties is very great. Each loyalty needs fuller and clearer definition to him. He finds it hard to light upon any real adjustment between them." But it is here also—and not only in the urgent matter of adjustment to the pressing material needs and the crying necessities of the country—that our educational system, our schools and colleges, have failed to respond to the inner call of the wavering, unsteady, young man in the most crucial moment of the psychological and spiritual conflict of his life.

Thus our problem is not simply one of effecting mechanical change in, or additions to, the usual matter-of-fact courses of study, and curricula, to suit the imperative material needs of the hour or of the epoch ; but it is the creation of a spiritual and cultural basis upon which to erect the intellectual edifice, to build a cultural synthesis, to bring back the play of the spiritual in life through the process of a liberal but broad education. Nor are the materials of this necessary, social regeneration on the spiritual and cultural basis which stands like a rock, and contends against the onslaught of ultra-modern thought and principles in the traditional centres of learning in Europe, and more specially in England, wanting in the sacred soil of India, and Bengal in particular ;

the very atmosphere of the country is surcharged with spiritual idealism and the soil of Bengal is sanctified with the inspiration of her immortal culture. We have only to call back, and invoke, this idealism and inspiration and build on their enduring foundation our system of education—and our ideology—so that it can truly fulfil its mission—the mission of making ‘wise man’ and of building ‘character’ as Emerson would have it. But let us turn our attention to the dry and dreary present, to the lamentable actualities of the situation so far as our present system of education is concerned. As the Sadler Commission very nicely puts it, . . . “The schools, it is felt (and the criticism is extended to the colleges) fail in the formation of character. Put more explicitly, this criticism charges the schools with failure to convey to a boy’s mind, a clear apprehension of an ideal of duty. Pressed further home, the charge amounts to more than this: it implies that the schools have no spiritual life which touches a boy’s inner nature, no corporate unity which appeals to and can sustain his affectionate loyalty, no moral or intellectual flame which may kindle his emotions. It must be acknowledged that in these respects, the work of the schools, as a whole is bleak and barren. There are indeed admirable exceptions ; but these, with encouraging hopes for the future, throw into darker contrast the shortcomings of the rest. The boys work assiduously—often too assiduously. School hours are long—generally too long. The schools are pre-occupied with certain kinds of knowledge—but within too narrow a range. . . Secondary education in Bengal, is preparing candidates, not making men. It teaches subjects, but offers no synthesis of knowledge, communicates no nucleus of unifying thought. It is dull not so much because it is poor in material resources as because it is poor in ideas. . .”

This charge by so authoritative and impartial a body as

the Sadler Commission, is more sweeping, more fundamental than the one that Prof. Rushbrook Williams had brought against our system of education—introduced by his countrymen—the charge namely, that “on the whole the main indictment against the structure of secondary education in India is that it has hitherto failed to equip those who undergo it for citizenship.” The indictment of the Sadler Commission naturally goes deeper and to the root of the matter, touching as it does the basic conception of the aim and function of education ; and it is generally endorsed by the thoughtful sections of the people at the top of which stands the towering personality of the greatest genius, the foremost representative man, of the East, Rabindra Nath Tagore (whose inimitable discourse on the educational problem we shall shortly deal with). But Dr. Sadler and his colleagues wanted to take away from the seriousness of their charge against the educational system, (including both the secondary, and university, stages) by pointing out the lack of a fundamental unity in the new knowledge, in the western education and culture, which is deplored by earnest thinkers in the West ; it must not, however, be forgotten that education—the educational system—in the West is not an exotic growth ; it is not—like India’s—a foreign plant engrafted on to a foreign soil to live or languish by the roadside, uncared for, alike by the State and the people—a plant which belonged, in the words of the late revered Principal Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, ‘to a type which flourished on foreign soil’ ; it must not be forgotten that education in the West, its educational system—notwithstanding the inrush of the new knowledge and criticism and the onslaught of the new ideals and aims—has deep roots in the very heart of national culture, and in the spiritual and religious tradition of centuries which the inundating waves of new ideals and new ideas fail to sweep off. But in India, in

Bengal, the new learning, the western education—not the least important part of it, the secondary education—cannot claim the abiding support, as it had not been built on the bedrock, of national culture and spiritual tradition of the people, which have been standing by, and sustaining, them in the vicissitudes ‘of improbable, immense fate’ and turmoils and tribulations of prolonged centuries.

But to turn to the thought-provoking review of the Sadler Commission ; “. . . in the other parts of the world,” it goes on, “and not least in England, schools and colleges, suffer to some extent from this same lack of an inspiring unity in their intellectual aim. The mass of new knowledge which now claims a place in the schemes of education has not yet found a synthesis. It has not been unified intellectually. Still less has it been co-ordinated with spiritual belief. And this dislocation between the different departments of intellectual life and their mal-adjustment to emotional and aesthetic experience result in the lack of those simple, authoritative generalizations which compel acceptance, touch every side of human experience and are the groundwork of definite teaching in primary and secondary schools. Towards some new synthesis, readily translatable into a code of moral principles and of conduct, human thought may be moving. But such a synthesis has not yet been reached, still less has any attempt at it won general acceptance or been filtered into a form available for use in the earlier stages of education. In those stages however it is specially needed by the teacher because it is then that he is giving to his pupils their introduction to study. And it is then also that it is needed by the learner in order that he may gain—through the imagination and emotions as well as through conscious reasoning—a sense of the fundamental unity and significance of what he learns. The deepest need now experienced in the secondary education of Bengal affects not India alone

but the whole world. Elsewhere, however, an ancient spiritual tradition, interwoven with the work and teaching of the schools, continues to supply something which serves, however imperfectly and not without challenge, as a basis of moral unity in religion. Even there, however, it does not cover the whole field of school work. Much of the intellectual side of education is untouched by it. But the spiritual and moral tradition holds so firm a place in school life and in school practice, and has such influence over conduct, that the lack of intellectual unity is less clearly perceived and the forces which form character continue strong, though they are weak in grappling with many of the problems which challenge us in the tasks of modern life. . .''

Nor were Dr. Sadler and his eminent colleagues alone in deploring the absence of the fundamental unity in the new learning and culture of the West, in emphasising the serious want of the harmonizing, dynamic principle and poise in her triumphant, many-sided civilization, which work for the synthesis, indispensable to the abiding progress of humanity and to its highest cultural fruition. Years before the Commissioners laboured in India, the better mind of the East thus cried out in the prophetic strain of her poet-philosopher, her greatest representative man, ". . . O New Men of the West! the work you have begun has not yet reached completion, the truth or falsity of the whole of it has not yet been ascertained ; you have not solved the eternal problems of human destiny. You have known much, you have acquired much, but have you gained happiness? We sit down inertly regarding the material universe as a mere illusion, while you hold to it as an eternal verity and toil and moil for it ; but are you, therefore, happier than we? You are daily discovering new wants which deepen the poverty of the poor ; you are dragging your population away from the healthy refuge of the home to the whirl of the

incessant work ; you have crowned Toil as the supreme lord of life, and seated Intoxication in the Chair of Repose. But can you clearly foresee where your vaunted progress is leading you? . . . Will you be able to attain a delicate and hearty maturity like ours? . . . or will your civilization rather end in a violent and terrible catastrophe, as when a machine is suddenly thrown out of work, a boiler bursts after accumulating excessive steam and heat, or two railway trains running towards each other on the same track crash together in a sudden collision?\*

A decade after Sir Michael Sadler and his colleagues dwelt on this lack of 'inspiring unity' in European knowledge or culture, the great Indian philosopher and oriental savant who is to-day amongst the world's most powerful exponents of spiritual values and synthesis in Civilization, deplored its fundamental defect, probing its glittering exterior†. ". . . Modern civilization is in the stage of economic barbarism. . . We have the assertion of mind over life and matter, and not yet of spirit over mind, life and body. To control life and body we have understood their processes and possibilities. In the first triumphs of scientific progress it tended to cast aside philosophy, despise thought, and almost succeeded in slaying religion. Though we are more learned and scientific than our ancestors, we cannot say that we are less brutal and more humane. Our education has not freed us from the intellectual bondage. It stimulates the mind without satisfying it. . . . Our rationality is a pretence . . . we are suffering from an inner lack of unity and general mental anarchy. . . Impulse is regarded as sacred and irrationality is cloaked in sanctimony. . ."

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\*Tagore: The Impact of Europe on India.

†S. Radhakrishnan: *Kalki* or The Future of Civilization: To-day and To-morrow Series.

It is because of this fundamental defect, this lack of essential unity and of the harmonizing, co-ordinating and humanising principle of synthesis in her new knowledge and culture, that Western civilization has to-day come to the brink of an abyss ; this fatal defect has led it into an inevitable process of terrible explosion, in a devastating wave of catastrophic conflagration from within—even after its reaching the zenith of intellectual progress and material prosperity and ascendancy circumscribed, it might be, in the few. Nor is the spectacle in India, any the more cheering, the isolated, and even glorious triumphs of her leaders of thought and action in the various fields of life notwithstanding ; indeed these solitary blazes of glory, these individual eminence and achievements, seem to make the 'darkness visible', the darkness of ignorance and illiteracy, and bring into greater relief the consuming chaos—and ignoble play—of passions and frenzies, of conflicting aims and false ideas and ideals, of individual hypocrisy and failure of collective reasoning and concerted action. All these disastrous consequences point to the failure of our educational system—put more bluntly—to the absence of true and real education in India for more than a century ; all these emphasise the one cardinal fact that our educational system—the western education which was sought to be engrafted on to our soil—has in spite of individual brilliance and achievement failed in the peculiar circumstances in which it was worked ; indeed it was bound to fail as it had to function, cutting itself adrift from the main currents of our national life and heritage, from the depths and profundity of our immortal spiritual culture ; and naturally, it failed to accomplish the most important mission of Education—in the work of 'the formation of character', as the institutions, the instruments of this mission, were without the redeeming, purifying and sustaining fire of 'a spiritual life' ; the educational system failed because the institutions

cared only—most of them had no other option—for ‘preparing candidates’, and not for ‘making men’ ; it is because of all these that India—that Bengal—to-day, is in the deepest depths of despair and degradation, distress and disease, misery and want, caught in the whirlpool of unceasing internecine quarrels and communal feuds, of envy and jealousy, of fatal inaction and insensibility. It is because of this prolonged, colossal and tragic failure of our education ‘to fit those who undergo it for citizenship’ that Bengal, to-day, is suffering from a veritable famine of men, level-headed, clear-sighted, strong in body, buoyant in spirit, full of faith and charity, men who can lift Bengal from her present deplorable position—and thus help lift India.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NEED FOR NEWER IDEALS AND SYNTHESIS IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The part of the State and the individual in education, in Sparta, Athens and Germany—Evils of State monopoly—'With the appearance of the wise man, the State expires'; Emerson's views—ancient India's aims, 'the formation of character'—India did not suffer from the lack of 'an inspiring unity' in knowledge or from one of synthesis—Modern city life not suitable to educational fruition—Dr. Annie Besant's exposition of India's ideals in education—Tagore's university at Bolepur; his ideals and principles—Mahatma Gandhi's academic ideals—Tagore's views on foreign education—The principles of National Council of Education in Bengal; Sir Gooroo Das's exposition of its aims and ideals—The world spiritual crisis, the lack of unity and synthesis in Education and culture in the West and in India—Dr. Radhakrishnan's indictment of western culture—Mazzini's emphasis on the religious idea—Sadler Commission on Bengal's 'deepest need in secondary education'—India was never without the religious basis in Education and Culture—Vivekananda on India's paramount occupation in religion—India cannot depend upon Europe in the crisis which faces Europe and India—India's safety in the spirit of her own culture and Religion, in the new education to be reconstructed in the light of her culture and on the supreme Vedantic Truth—Sri Aurobindo on the reaction of the West and the East to 'The fundamental truth'—Vivekananda on India's unflinching constancy to this 'truth'—India must hark back and hold fast to this truth in education for her deliverance from her internal menace—Dr. Radhakrishnan on the 'dream of great religions'—Mahatma Gandhi's lead in the crisis, in consonance with the teaching of the Vedanta and the Gita—India's salvation lies in following this lead first in her academic life and centres—Radhakrishnan on the religion of the future—Sri Aurobindo's vision of the 'new and larger synthesis' in the new age in India.

The ascendancy of the State, with its growing sway over, and its increasing tendencies to interfere in, the life

and activities of the people, has brought to the forefront a paramount problem which Man has yet to solve—the problem of proper adjustment of relations between the individual and the society, between the State and the citizen. In matters of such vital importance to the State, the society and the individual (the basic unit of both), as education, which supplies the key to, and is the indispensable requisite of stable progress of the state, the society and the individual, humanity has suffered immensely owing to the confusion in the governing principles and guiding ideas wrought by the usurpation and undue exercise of power by the State. With the advance of modern thought and criticism there has been considerable clarification of the ideas and aims that must guide the activities of the State and the society on the one hand, and of the individual on the other—so far so as matters of universal interest like education are concerned. Not only the ideals and principles, but the conception of the functions of the State and of the individuals and the local agencies, must be made clear, in the major and momentous affairs of humanity such as education.

In ancient Sparta the State had arrogated to itself the whole task—as it had undoubtedly the power—of directing and moulding in its own way, and for its own narrow purpose, the entire course of education and training of its future citizens so as to leave no room for individual freedom of development or variety of growth ; thus was crushed the powers of initiative and potentialities of individual character, thus were choked the main springs of human personality and the door banged on the composite, many-sided progress of society, and the growth of natural humanity, which is the essential prerequisite to national well-being and greatness. Thus Sparta came to possess the most formidable military machine, and reached the zenith of military glory as she practically became

invincible on her own ground. But tiny Athens, torn into factions and play-thing of demagogues as the democracies invariably are from time to time, encouraged—in its palmy days at any rate—liberty of thought and freedom of culture in individual citizens ; and the Athenian State did not cast its sinister shadow over, nor tried to shape in an iron uniform mould, the whole course of education and culture of the entire body of its citizens ; Athens was defeated on the field of battle and humbled, no doubt ; but through the liberty of thought and culture, through freedom of action and education, the growth of human personality, the development of man's intellectual and spiritual genius reached such an acme of excellence, soared to such superb heights of perfection expressing itself in such sublimity of form and in arts and letters, in philosophy and science that Grecian culture formed the cultural and spiritual basis of European civilization. In modern age, in Germany, specially in Prussia, the State has taken upon itself the unnatural burden of organizing and controlling the educational system and of moulding for its own purposes, through the State controlled education and training, the lives and character of its citizens and the result is the most formidable reproduction of Sparta's military machine and unbalanced ascendancy of Spartan culture. But in education, which alone can call forth the best and the noblest in the nation and at the same time holds the key to the sound development of human personality and growth of individual character and national culture—the surest foundation of national greatness and social progress—the State cannot, with impunity, monopolize the entire direction and control, far less arrogate to itself the sole and supreme voice and share ; were it to attempt to outstrip its proper limits, it would be to stem the natural course of development of human personality, to freeze 'the genial current of the soul'.

As Emerson says, 'Nature hates monopolies and exceptions. . . All good conversation, manners, and action, come from a spontaneity which forgets usages, and makes the moment great. Nature hates calculators ; her methods are salutary and impulsive. . .' Any attempt at state monopoly or control on an extensive scale in the vital matter of education must choke the sources and channels of this spontaneity and freedom, essential to national and individual greatness ; it is not possible for the State to provide for that variety of type and freedom of growth which are the greatest factors in building up of individual character—the basis of strong national life and a lofty and noble humanity ; "the less Government we have," points out Emerson, "the better—the fewer laws and less confided power. The antidote to this abuse of formal government is the influence of private character, the growth of the Individual ; the appearance of the principal to supersede the proxy ; the appearance of the wise man, of whom the existing government is, it must be owned, but a shabby imitation. That which all things tend to educe, which freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions, go to form and deliver, is character ; that is the end of nature, to reach unto this coronation of her king. To educate the wise man, the State exists ; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State." Here then we find enunciated the ideal that the State—and the society—must set before itself—more particularly, is here the ideal that must mould the character, and govern the working, of the system of education of a people who aspire after a better life and a nobler world order.

The modern mind is rapidly awakening to the fuller significance which the working of a dynamic, efficient and lofty educational system has for humanity. But the

better mind of India, specially of India of yore, was alive to the significance of education and culture in the broadest and highest sense. So India had pitched her ideals in, and attuned her spirit to, education, in the highest key ; she had fashioned her culture and worked her educational and cultural centres in the loftiest spirit for thousands of years. And this ideal and spirit that made her education and culture a living and dynamic force in life were unique and are foreign to the modern mind encompassed in the materialism of the West. But to India, education and culture to be worth the name must aim at the uplift of the whole man, into a higher plane of thought and life, at the re-birth of the humanity, in the individual and the race, into a truer, nobler, and ultimately as Sri Aurobindo pithily put it, into the life divine. Nothing short is the destiny of man, nothing short should be the ideal in education and culture. "The destiny of organised nature", says Emerson, "is amelioration, and who can tell its limits? It is for man to tame the chaos ; on every side, whilst he lives, to scatter the seeds of science and of song, that climate, corn, animals, men may be milder, and the germs of love and benefit may be multiplied. . ." And education must aim at no less ; education to be of abiding value to humanity must help forward 'this destiny of organised nature'—must help in the universal 'amelioration'. But this lofty ideal, essential to the highest progress of society and civilization, can only be worked in an atmosphere of 'spontaneity' and morality ; and this redeeming ideal which shines as a beacon light in a dark world had only been worked in ancient India—and to some extent in ancient Greece ; when the State and the individual worked to bring forth what, in the words of Emerson, 'freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions go to form and deliver—character' ; when the system of education was so attuned and worked as to pave the way for the

'appearance of the wise man' ; when the highest in the State, the royal and imperial personages recognised 'the wise man'—the spiritual leaders—the self-realized, *visis*—'as the State', as the embodiment of the highest and noblest in the State and effaced themselves in their presence.

And these 'wise men', in their turn, were left absolutely free, with all the resources of the State and the Royalty laid at their sacred feet, to impart the highest culture and education, to keep alight the torch of loftiest learning to be handed over to the succeeding generation. It was because of this atmosphere of absolute spontaneity and spiritual elevation and moral excellence, it was because of an atmosphere conducive to perfect freedom of thought and culture, meditation and discipline that education and culture and knowledge of the very highest type could be imparted by the 'wise men' of those golden epochs and sublimest works in the domains of philosophy and poetry, arts and science and the supremest achievements in the unexplored regions of religion and spirituality were possible in ancient India ; it was the superb working of their system of imparting education and culture which aimed at 'formation of character', which 'freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions, go to form and deliver', that bred the race of unique intellectual giants, leaders of thought and spiritual seers and sages, that race of supermen exemplifying the highest type in Nature's unceasing process of evolution on human plane.

But no educational system can work for, and achieve, this supreme end, this summum bonum in human life, without the requisite spiritual background, without a religious basis—without the help of a spiritual religion—using the word in its broadest acceptation. Whatever might be said of the educational systems, and the educational institutions in the West working without 'an inspiring unity in intellectual aim', however, one might lament the absence of a synthesis 'in

mass of new knowledge' achieved by the West and 'claiming a place' in her educational schemes, India—and Bengal not excluded—the home of the Vedas and the Upanisads which first proclaimed the all-pervading Unity of life and purpose reigning throughout the universe, through eternity, the birth place of Buddha and Sankara, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna, Nanak and Kavir, has not had to suffer from the absence of a fundamental unity in her knowledge and in her traditional educational centres. The trends of her religion and her culture, of the religious experiences of her seers and sages, and of the working of her educational centres, from time immemorial, converged and rested upon her firm conception of the 'inspiring unity', of a central synthesis in knowledge and culture, in Religion and Education all of which she worked for, through all of which, she aimed at, the same divine consummation and achieved and sought to achieve this summum bonum in life ; as a result, in India all the four were intermingled, nay, all the four were sought in one supreme, life-long preparation and discipline and had one glorious ideal in view, the ideal namely, the birth of divinity in man and the ascent of man into the realm of the divine—so that her educational efforts and cultural efflorescence were inspired by, and tended to realize, this great Ideal and Objective in life ; hence it was quite natural for her to base the whole ordering of society, the working of her culture and the functioning of her education upon the religion which supplied the essential unity to her knowledge, and an abiding synthesis to her culture ; through the ages India's Religion or Education—no less than her knowledge or culture—is not, in the words of Sir S. Radhakrishnan, "an apologetic for the existing social order, nor is it a mere instrument for social salvation. It is an attempt to discover the ideal possibilities of human life, a quest for emancipation from the immediate compulsions of vain and petty moods. . . It

is the reaction of the whole man to the whole reality.' And her education having thus had the same central aim and object, the same essential process of preparation and purification, as religion, had the same sustaining, 'inspiring unity', the same exalted and all-pervading synthesis, and the same superb spiritual atmosphere to work in, as her religion.

But if education is to work up to the loftiest and the most inspiring ideal in the making of man, in the 'divinsing of the life of man', in the sublimising of his character and personality, by unfolding the noblest and rarest and serenest possibilities of human nature, it is not in the sordid, selfish, artificial atmosphere of the city, in the dust and din, in the bustle and hurry of the modern city life that it can accomplish this highest mission ; it is not in its ugly surroundings and morbid setting that this superb functioning of the educational institutions and the signal triumph of educational process are to be expected, and expected to bring about the rich spiritual fruition and cultural efflorescence that humanity is longing for in the modern age. This planting of the city universities, the highest centres of learning and of intellectual work and profoundest thinking where the bounds of human knowledge and frontiers of Truth are sought to be extended, this founding and rearing of numerous city institutions, big and small, where not only education is meant to be imparted to the young but where character is to be built, and man, made in the image of God, might be, and often are, inevitable ; but nonetheless do they tend to choke the natural channels through which humanity is to reach up, and act up, to the divinity, its highest ideal. Hence most of the renowned centres of learning in the world in which both the

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\*Radhakrishnan—An Idealist View of Life: The Hibbert Lectures for 1929.



teachers and the taught join in the highest intellectual and cultural work and which aim at building up of character, have been founded, away from the busy haunts and distracted atmosphere of big cities ; Oxford and Cambridge, Eton and Harrow, Benares and Aligarh, Gurukul and Santiniketan, might be cited as some of the instances of educational and cultural centres of this type.

We are indebted to that gifted lady from the West—who had made India her home and thoroughly dedicated her life and her rare intellectual and spiritual powers in the cause of India—for a beautiful exposition of India's ideals in Education ; in the course of the first Kamala Lectures, in Calcutta, Dr. Annie Besant said, “. . . There is no creative Thought other than that of Brahman in manifestation ; and because there were so many in India who ever thought of that Supreme, therefore did India flower out into civilization unrivalled in the depth of its Philosophy, in the spirituality of its Religion, and in the perfection of its Dharma of orderly and graded Individual and National Life, expressing as none other has ever done that balance, that equilibrium, which is Yoga that which saved her, when all the contemporaries of her splendid Nationality have been carried away by Time's tremendous rapids . . . for not theirs the secret of her immortal Youth.

And what is that secret? It lay hidden in her Education and Culture, or rather in the Ideals which created these ; for the idea is prior to the form. . . Let her turn again to her Ideals, and she shall renew her strength. . . Here is an Indian Ideal that it would be well to revive ; for this planting of the universities in the midst of great cities is European, not Indian. Oxford and Cambridge alone in England have kept the traditions of their Aryan forefathers. . . . Not from them (modern city universities) will come sublime philosophies and

artistic masterpieces ; they will doubtless produce men of inventive genius, miracles of machinery, new ways of annihilating space. But for a country where man is valued for what he is, and not for what he has . . . the Indian Ideal is the more suitable. The essence of that Ideal is not the forests as such but being in close touch with Nature ; to let her harmonies permeate the consciousness, and her calm soothe the restlessness of the mind. Hence it was the forest which best suited the type and object of instruction in the days which evolved *Risis* ; instruction which aimed at profound, rather than swift and alert, thought . . . instruction which thought less of an accumulation of facts poured out in pupils' memory than the drawing out in him the faculty which could discover a truth, hidden beneath a mass of irrelevancies ; of such fruitful study the Hindu Ashrama in the forest is the symbol. It must have a few representatives, at least, in India, if she is to rise to her former level of supreme intellectual and spiritual achievement ; some places in which the three Margas may be taught, and Yoga may be practised, until the Yogi is fit, as of old, to go out into the world of human activity as the Wise Man who lives that life which the *Bhagavat Gita* teaches. A few 'forests' should exist in India for those who seek Paravidya that she may again become the Spiritual Teacher of the world. . . The Buddhist Vihara obtained similar results by founding the universities in a spot of natural beauty and enclosing a huge space with a high wall pierced as in Nalanda with but one gate, in Vikramsila by six, in all cases carefully guarded by a Dwar Pandita. Within were not only splendid buildings—'Towers, domes, and pavilion stood amidst a paradise of trees, gardens and fountains'. There were flower-strewn lakes and blossom-laden shrubs. Well was understood natural beauty. The sacred books of the Hindus and the Buddhists were studied ;

and the curriculum included Anatomy and Medicine. . . . Dr. Macdonnel states that in "Science, Phonetics, Grammar, Mathematics, Anatomy, Medicine and Law, the attainments of Indians were far in advance of what was achieved by the Greeks. . . ." During whole course in School as in College, strict Brahmacharya was enjoined. Here, again, is an Ideal which must be restored. . . In the Muslim Period. . . the Courts of Musalman Rulers were sanctuaries of learned men, painters, poets and musicians. . . Whether in Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam, we find a similar care for Vocational Education among the higher social classes, supplying the nation with the professions necessary for the healthy functioning of the national life, maintaining the high level of Literature and Arts as well as the training of the Statesmen, the Minister, the Military and civil organisations and administrations. The manual labor classes were equally well provided for by general instruction, in reading, writing, arithmetic, accountancy, and careful training in the simple and more artistic Crafts. . . The teaching of religion was universal. . . Taking a bird's eye-view, we may perhaps say that Ashramas were dominated by Philosophy and Metaphysics, while not neglecting the Sciences and the Arts ; and the Viharas were dominated by Science, while not neglecting Philosophy and Arts. . ."

Rabindra Nath's school and college at Santiniketan, Bolepur, as its name implies, is a university in miniature—a university which in itself typifies, and works for, the synthesis in world-culture, for the 'inspiring unity' which the universities in the West are yet to find in their 'intellectual aim' ; securely founded on the bedrock of national culture as it is, it has nothing to do with a morbid orthodoxy ; but with the universalism of the Vedas and the Upanisads, and the catholicity and humanity of Buddhism it embraces in its courses all

that is best and noblest in the modern thought, in the new learning and culture of the West and works for a cultural and spiritual harmony, which is, in a sense, the essence of India's message to a war-weary, intoxicated world groping in the dark, a world order tottering and tumbling down under the weight of its own blind force and suicidal fury. "To give spiritual culture to our boys," Dr. Tagore said, "was my principal object in starting my school at Bolepur. Fortunately, in India, we have the model before us, in the tradition of our ancient forest schools. Having this ideal of a school in my mind which should be a homeland and a temple in one, where teaching should be a part of a worshipful life, I selected this spot away from all distractions of town. . ." Classes at Santiniketan are held from 7 to 10 in the morning and from 2 to 5 in the afternoon, preferably under the shade of the trees. Music and acting are taught and the medium of instruction is Bengali ; while Indian culture and civilization, Indian History and Philosophy occupy prominent places in curriculum, European Knowledge and Thought, too, absorb a considerable part of the teaching—so that Santiniketan might be truly said to be reviving once more the glories of ancient Buddhist Universities, where the culture and scholarship of the world met and the better mind of humanity worked for a synthesis in world culture and a harmony in human civilization.

Apart, however, from this 'university', Dr. Tagore holds very pronounced views about our system of education—specially on rearing up of an educational structure, and planting of a vast educational system, shooting forth its ramifications far and near, with a University, and a cluster of colleges and schools scattered in the midst of a crowded and growing city ; its perennial dust and din, its suffocating atmosphere of smoke and heat,

its busy haunts of business and its numerous dens of sin and crime, he holds, are all destructive of the essential serenity of academic atmosphere, of the growth of a healthy corporate life in the institutions, and ultimately of a vigorous and buoyant manhood. Dr. Tagore had expressed himself in his own beautiful and forceful Bengali in his brochure on Education ; he holds that an educational structure should be erected only in an atmosphere of nature's peace and harmony, if possible amidst the sublime aspects of nature's beauties and glories, with the expanding, illimitable vault of shining heavens above, and the green expanse of Nature's carpet stretching beneath in all directions, with the birds chanting, the breeze whispering, the river murmuring as it flows on and the flowers blossoming—all combining to contribute to the reign of Nature's harmony and glory, and to the natural unfolding of the student's mind and of his innate powers, contributing thus to the development of his character and manhood. And the ideal institution, situated 'far from the madding crowd's' busy haunts, in the open country, should be a self-contained and self-supporting one, in respect of the daily necessities of life, with the students joining in the cultivation of the attached lands, in tending the cattle and in attending to the gardens. Dr. Tagore is at one with Dr. Besant in urging the restoration of strict *brahmacharya*, of our Tapoban and Ashramas and the installation anew of our ancient preceptor in place of our modern teacher ; he would, at all costs, bring back the joy of life, the buoyancy of spirit, the energy and enthusiasm of tender age, to the student life, doing away with the fatal dullness and dreary routine which stultify and dwarf its natural growth. He would instal the Indian civilization and culture, Indian History and Religion in the centre of studies and courses, so as to renew the relation and co-relation, which once existed, between our education and

our every day life, and thus to ensure their natural action and reaction.

No educationist or public man, in India or abroad, indeed no thinking man, can afford to ignore the ideas and principles of Mahatma Gandhi on the all-important question of education in our country. The National university of Guzrat at Ahmedabad might be said to represent his views and ideals on Indian education.\* “. . . This institution”, says Roman Rolland, “was inspired by the ideals of an united India. Its two religious pillars were Hindu Dharma and Islamic faith. It claimed to rescue the Indian dialects from decay and make them the source of a national regeneration. Gandhi justly considers . . . ‘that a systematic study of Asiatic cultures is not less essential to a complete education than the study of western sciences. The vast treasures of Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian, Pali and Magadhi, should be explored so that secrets of national strength may be discovered. . . A new culture should be constructed on the foundations of the past, enriched by the experience of centuries. It ought to be a synthesis of the different civilizations which have influenced India and have naturalised here. The synthesis cannot be formed after the American model where one dominant culture absorbs and destroys all the rest. Each culture will have its legitimate place in our system. Our object is harmony and not a mere external unity brought about by force.” The students will have to study all Indian religions. The Hindus should familiarise themselves with the Koran and the Mussalmans with the Shastras. The National University excludes nothing but ‘the spirit of exclusion’. In the whole of humanity, there could be no ‘untouchables’. The study of Hindustani will be compulsory, this being the

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\*Roman Rolland: Mahatma Gandhi.

true national language, composed of Sanskrit, Hindi and Persianised Urdu. The intellectual class will receive professional training, and the others will receive literary education. Thus will the differences of class be attenuated. The spirit of independence will be kept not only by theoretical teaching (studies) but also by what Gandhi calls a 'vocational education'. As against the European education which undervalues manual labour and devotes exclusive attention to the training up of the head, Gandhi wishes that manual labour should be introduced into all schools from the infant classes upwards. The child should pay for his education by work in the shape of spinning, and should thereby learn, without delay, to eke out its livelihood and maintain an independent existence. The whole structure of the education of the heart has also to be built up. Before the character of the pupils is shaped the character of the teachers themselves has to be formed. This is the object of the superior Institutions which would form the crown of the arch or vault of modern education. These institutions, like the great monasteries of Western Benedictines and 'religious pioneers of the earth and the soul', are, much more than schools, real convents where the sacred fire of India is fed, and developed, in order that it may be propagated outside."

Before we proceed further, we would rather try to understand more fully the soulful ideas and feelings of Rabindranath on the great problems of education in Bengal, and in India. "... The result of all these," said Dr. Tagore\* "is the all-pervading decay of the digestive assimilating power (in the students). The digestive organ—the assimilating faculty—of the mind cannot attain a maturity just as the physique remains undeveloped owing

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\*Shiksha (*translated*).

to the lack of sufficient food, exercise and play. Our intelligence is not being strong and ripe in proportion to our degrees and our reading. We cannot hold to anything so steadily, we cannot build anything to a finish ; nor can we establish anything firmly. Neither are our opinions, nor are our conversation or conduct or institutions like those of people who have grown up. Hence it is that we try to cover up and gloss over our mental poverty with a veneer of excessive talk and display and vanity. The main reason of all these is that there is no element of joy and delight in our education from boyhood onwards. We go on committing to memory what is very necessary ; with this process we just tide over things—but we cannot gain by the unfolding of our faculties. Food, and not air, is the remedy of hunger ; but in order to digest food properly, we have to take air. Similarly a boy requires many readable books to assimilate the contents of one text book. Reading with joy or pleasure enhances the unseen power of reading, and helps the easy and natural growth of the power to grasp, as well as the retaining and thinking power ; thinking and imaginative faculties are undoubtedly very powerful and essential assets in life. If we want to grow up to our full stature as men, we cannot do so without these assets ; so if we neglect to cultivate this power of imagination and thought, from our boyhood, we will not be able to harness it to our service when we need it. But in our present educational process that course is practically shut out. We have to be engaged quite a long time in simply learning the intricacies of a language ; but English is such a foreign language and our teachers are so little educated themselves, that thoughts and ideas cannot enter into our mind as we try to be proficient in that language. In this way we have to wait pretty long even for a small acquaintance with English thought and ideology and our thinking faculty remains idle for the lack of a suit-



able subject to be exercised in. . . We are only reading and reading but we are not thinking ; the result is we are adding heaps upon heaps but are not building and constructing. . . The materials that have been collected are abundant, undoubtedly ; and we had not had before so large a quantity of bricks and mortars for mental construction ; but our great blunder has been to think that to collect materials is to build with them. . . Hence if we mean to make men of our boys, we have to begin this man-making work from their very boyhood ; otherwise, they will remain boys only, and not men. Instead of taxing, and thrushing upon, the memorising power, all the weight, from the very boyhood, we have got to give free play to thinking and imaginative faculties, duly. . . . In cultivation, there is a time when a smart shower is specially necessary in the field ; but a hundred showers will not bring forth a good harvest if this time is past ; similarly, in juvenile development, there is a specially opportune moment when lively thoughts and new-born imagination are essentially necessary for the life's maturity of growth and fruitfulness ; just at that moment, a good shower from the sky of literature will make for profusion of harvest. . . . In the lifeless course of our education, that supreme moment gets past in vain. From childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, we arrive carrying the weight of words, only. In the empire of the Goddess of Learning, we just drag our existence as wage-earners with our backbone bent down but without all-round development of our manhood. . . ."

All these thought-leaders and reformers have thus been great exponents of national education, of a new education on national lines, of a new departure in education ; they all urge *brahmacharya*, strict discipline in the young as well as free play to imaginative

faculties and thinking powers as of old ; but national education will be a misnomer if it simply exhausts itself in the futile attempt at reproducing the past, education will only defeat its purpose if it spends all its force in a vain-glorious imitation of the past, however glorious, or of the foreign progress, however brilliant and alluring. Nor were the promoters of national education movement in India—in Bengal, specially—victims of this false ideal in education. We might mention in this connection the Memorandum of Association of the National Council of Education (Bengal) which set forth, among others, these objects of the Council :

(1) To impart education, literary and scientific as well as Technical and Professional, on national lines and exclusively under national control, not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the existing system of Primary, Secondary and Collegiate Education attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its literature, history and philosophy, and designed to incorporate with the best oriental ideals of life and thought the best assimilable ideals of the West.

(2) To promote the study chiefly of such branches of arts and sciences as are best calculated to develop the material resources of the country and satisfy its pressing wants.

(3) To provide for denominational religious education subject to certain conditions. These were among the principal objects for the fulfilment of which national educational movement was inaugurated in Bengal under the inspired leadership of Rabindranath and Aurobindo, Asvini Kumar and Bipin Chandra. As we have said, it remained for the greatest educationist in India—Sir Asutosh—to build a great and glorious super-structure in the sphere of education by holding fast, and living up to, the ideals of national education preached by these thought-leaders of Swadeshi epoch in Bengal.

We have now to refer to another lucid exposition of these ideals by one of the most prominent and respected leaders of this movement—Sir Gooroo Das Banerjee. "In relation to the first object," (mentioned above) said Sir Gooroo Das on an important occasion, "there may be misconceptions which should be removed at the very outset. It may be said that though love of one's own country and one's own nation is laudable, yet education should not be limited by consideration of nationality, but should proceed upon a cosmopolitan basis. This may be true to a certain extent, and so far as it is true, the National Council accepts it by expressly providing for the incorporation of the best assimilable ideals of western life and thought with our own. But though the assimilation of foreign ideals is desirable in the later stages of mental growth, in the earlier stages such assimilation is not possible ; and any attempt to force it on will retard instead of accelerating the healthy development of the mind. Every student, when commencing his school education brings with him his outfit of language the importance of which should be separately considered, his stock of thoughts and sentiments, the gift of his nation, which the teacher instead of ignoring and hastily displacing, should try to utilize and gradually improve. Want of due regard to this elementary principle is, I think, one of the main reasons why the existing system of English education in this country has failed to produce satisfactory results. Profiting by past experience and proceeding on *a priori* grounds, the National Council has accordingly deemed it not only desirable but necessary to impart education on national lines, and attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its literature, its history and philosophy . . . We shall certainly teach our pupils to love their country and their nation, but we shall never tolerate in them much less teach them, want of love for others ; for we

devoutly believe in the principle often/lost sight of by many in the elation of prosperity or under the exasperation of adversity, that true self-love is incompatible with want of love for any fellowmen, and that true self-interest can never be secured by injury to the legitimate interests of others. . . ." Here in these simple words, are, then, to be found expressed some basic but loftiest ideas and fundamental principles which form the cornerstone of Mahatmaji's philosophy of action and education, of Rabindranath's soulful patriotism and humanity, of Dr. Besant's catholicity and faith in Indian culture and ideals. It cannot be too often repeated that our education of the future, whatever might be its past defects and present deficiency, must be built on bedrock of these illuminating and undying ideas and principles ; love of one's country, love of one's self, love for others—and last but not least—love of religion and love of God, conceived in the broadest spirit—must form the essentials of, and give the life and meaning to, our education, the new education that humanity, that we in Bengal and India, stand in most urgent need of.

It is in this four-fold love, in the broadest and truest conception of, and enlightened and unshakable constancy to, this four-fold love, that the enduring resolution of the world's spiritual crisis—the crisis in western education and culture and the crisis in Indian life and thought, in Indian education and politics—has to be sought. And unless this crisis is resolved—unless a fair beginning is made in its resolution—humanity, either in the West or in India, "seems to be delivered over" in the words of Emerson, "from the hands of one set of criminals into the hands of another set of criminals as fast as the government is changed, and the march of civilization is a train of felonies." It is no doubt true that we in India, in Bengal, are far more and immediately affected by the crisis in India's collective and indivi-

dual life—more specially in the sphere of education and politics—taking the terms in their broader sense—than we would or should be interested in the crisis that has overtaken European knowledge and culture through the lack of ‘an inspiring unity in intellectual aim.’ But we must not forget that our politics or our education has so far been a sad replica of the western original ; western civilization and culture, western politics and education, transplanted on to India, cannot but be an exotic here, however brilliant they might be in the West and however alluring they might appear to the East ; nevertheless, India cannot escape from the repercussions of the subtle but powerful spiritual crisis in western education and thought, even though she might be, as she actually is to-day, smarting and bending down, under the terrible hydraheaded evils of the exotic and unnatural growth in the sphere of politics and education. There is no future, no hope for human civilization and culture, for politics and education either in the West or in the East, in India and in Bengal particularly, if Man fails to realize and live up to the essential ‘unity in intellectual aim’, catch the eternal rhythm in Nature and let its harmony permeate his life through education or hold fast to that cultural and spiritual synthesis, from the lack of which the West, as Dr. Sadler and his colleagues tersely put it, has been suffering, and towards which, humanity might be moving. One has only to ponder over terrific, soul-stirring and classic indictments of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath or those of Tolstoy and Romain Rolland and many of the profound thinkers in the West against the destructive and dehumanising tendencies in its civilization ; one has only to seriously think of the senseless drama of destruction, the blind concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few at the cost of the many, the ruthless application of science and knowledge to further the most

sordid, selfish and inhuman ends imaginable and the harnessing of the whole power and resources of a country to the chariot-wheels of greed and egoism, individual and collective, to realize the immensity of failure of Education and Culture in the West ; the legacy of the sway of the false ideal of nationalism and individualism—in short of the fatal ignoring of the fundamental laws of life and truth—has been the abyssmal depth of spiritual bankruptcy that the Western civilization and society have been landed on through the fatal lack of an 'unspiring unity in the intellectual aim', through the absence of a synthesis in western knowledge, Education and Culture—through the tremendous spiritual crisis ; notwithstanding her varied and vaunted knowledge and militant and conquering civilization the West failed, thus, to crystallize, rationalize and spiritualize her culture and her education with an active guiding and dynamic sense of the supreme Truth—the truth, of the fundamental unity and sanctity of life, its eternal harmony and rhythm and the ultimate spiritual principle pervading, sustaining, and manifesting itself in not only the life-process, not only the evolution on human plane, but also the whole universe ; Christianity had certainly a vision of this supreme Truth when it enunciated the doctrine of universal brotherhood of Man under the universal fatherhood of God ; but the worship of the mammon, the blind pursuit of ambition and greed and luxury cost Europe the indispensable sense of the spiritual value and of spiritual basis of life and universe which religion might alone have fostered ; this fatal deficiency was reflected in her cultural aim and educational process—though there were not wanting heroic and enlightened spirits who worked to bring back the sense of the Infinite and Eternal swaying and sustaining people's mind and guiding them in their checkered journey through life.

"Modern civilization," as Sir S. Radhakrishnan says in his inimitable way, ". . . is concerned more with the world and its power than with the soul and its perfection. It asks us to make the best of the business in hand, for first and final principles are beyond our kin. It is an endless, anxious striving to perfect the exterior forms of existence, to exploit the economic potentialities of the earth, to spread far and wide material well-being and master the forces of nature for the ends of man. . . We live outwardly, talking glibly about ideals of humanity and mouthing current phrases, though we are impervious to ideals and innocent of discipline. . . . Economic success is our highest ideal, and almost all our wars are due to economic causes. Economics is our religion. Empire is big business. For the sake of business and markets we sacrifice our intellectual freedom as it may produce doubt, our emotional sympathy for it may impair our efficiency in the exploitation of the labouring classes and government of the backward classes, and our imagination as it may interfere with firmness. Our civilization is a conquering one based on rivalries of individual and races. . . . It is compounded of speed and daring, adventure and excitement, eager activity and headstrong tumult. . . ."\* It would altogether be wrong to suppose that the better mind of the West has rebelled only to-day against its barren but fatal materialism, against its 'vaulting ambition' and consuming greed ; there were not wanting ardent souls in Europe—who wanted to re-establish religion and spirituality—which alone can give us 'an inspiring aim' in politics as much as in education and culture—as the basis of life and the main motive force of civilization. "Politics", cried Mazzini, "merely accepts man as he is, in his actual position and character ; define his tendencies, and regulate his action in harmony with them. The religious

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\*Radhakrishnan: *Kalki* or The Future of Civilization.

idea alone has power to transform both. The religious idea is the very breath of Humanity ; its life, soul, conscience, manifestation. Humanity only exists in the consciousness of its origin and the presentiment of its destiny ; and only reveals itself by concentrating its powers upon some one of the intermediate points between these two. . . .”\*

But Life to-day has lost its direction and misses its purpose, cut adrift from its spiritual moorings and values ; confusion of aims and chaos of ideas reign in human mind ; Education and Culture cannot escape from their repercussions but must reflect in their progress the anarchy which has taken the place of harmony and serenity in men's mind and affairs. Unfortunately for India she has yet to shed the glamour of false ideals and principles and of the dazzling but soulless culture of the West which to-day have not exhausted their sinister and inhuman possibilities in spite of the powerful influence of organized, established Church on education. India has, moreover, to contend against a Godless education, out of touch with her ancient religion and culture, out of harmony with her spiritual tradition ; her new education fashioned as it was after the western model without its ‘ancient spiritual tradition’ and religious background, cannot, we have already said, serve the purpose which education accomplished in the West moulding and shaping national character and spirit, if not in the making of Man in the image of God. Whatever internal re-adjustment or reconstruction in the outward structure, whatever re-orientation of aims and policy, might be urgently called for in education in India, in Bengal, it has got to be taken back to its old moorings to, to its essential anchorage in, religion and spirituality ; as they are the life and soul of India's dynamic culture and civilization through ‘untold

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\*Mazzini: The Faith and the Future.



centuries'. Indian education must now shake off its fascination for western ideals, and its dependence upon western model, which condemn it to a perpetually exotic and moribund condition. As Dr. Sadler and his colleagues pithily said, ". . . But in India, western education is an exotic. However warmly welcomed by many of those who receive it, it remains an exotic . . . secondary education in India . . . has to rely upon the intellectual materials of its secular studies for what may give firmness to moral principle and may kindle an ideal of duty. Much indeed has been found in those materials which gives inspiration and guidance. . . . But so far as the lack of a synthesis in modern thought makes itself felt, either consciously through criticism or unconsciously through discord in moral guidance, Indian secondary education feels the stress of the difficulty in an acute form, because it has to rely for ethical as well as for intellectual discipline upon that body of knowledge which itself suffers from inner divisions and has not yet been integrated with older forms of worship and belief."

There cannot be a bigger tragedy for a nation like ours, no greater irony of fate to India, than to have thousands of educational institutions working, to have an enormous system functioning for a century, away from the centre of, and unsupported by, her traditional religion and her spiritual culture which have been the secret and sustaining force of her life and vitality through the ages. Even when she was stepped in the depths of degradation, fallen from her celestial height of greatness and glories—even in the darkest period of her history, she was not without a profound and powerful undercurrent of spiritual vigour and cultural renaissance ; even her deepest gloom has been shot through by the occasional inextinguishable sparks of her spiritual life and the flashing up of her religious spirit in the individuals reflecting the dormant but deathless genius of the race. Throughout the course of

Mahammadan rule and sway, even in the midst of the prolonged turmoils and anarchy following the break-up of this rule when the British people were slowly consolidating their position, the whole country was covered with a net-work of schools wherein secular education was given along with, and stress was laid on, religious instruction. And Bengal was never in serious want of 'an inspiring unity' in her intellectual or her spiritual aim; Bengal had never to depend upon a foreign tradition and foreign educational system and cultural centres for the essential synthesis in her knowledge and culture, the indispensable unifying force in life giving the sanctity to morality and paving the way for the play of the spiritual principle in society. Even in the mediæval period, her Sri Chaitanya and Ramprosad, her Chandidas and Jaidev, the immortal sparks from her eternal spiritual genius and religious vitality, were at once the greatest representative men of their country and the glorious messengers of her spiritual culture and tradition, which alone can remove the want of the inner unity and of unifying synthesis that the West—and, to the extent of her cultural subservience, India also—is suffering from.

As Swami Vivekananda said in the course of an inspiring address after his glorious mission in America,\* . . . "To-day I stand here to say with conviction . . . that if there is any land on this earth that can lay claim above all others to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi* . . . The land where humanity has developed farthest towards gentleness, generosity, purity and calm, the land above all of introspection and of spirituality, it is India. Here from most ancient times have been born the founders of religion, deluging the earth again and again with pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Here

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\*Address at Colombo.

have begun those tidal waves of philosophy that have traversed oceans, East and West, North and South and now here again must rise that wave which is to spiritualize the material civilization of the modern world. . . . And the centre of all these, the heart from which the blood flows, the main springs of the national life, lies, believe me, in one simple fact. To the other nations of the world religion is but one among the many interests of life. They have politics, they have the enjoyment of social life, they have all that wealth can buy and power can bring. They have all that senses can enjoy, and among all these various pleasures and searching after more, to give a little more edge to the cloyed appetites—among all this, there is a little bit of religion. But here, in India, religion is the one and only occupation of life. . . .”

But humanity and civilization have, both in the West and in the East, been long approaching a crisis, and along with them, Man's education and culture ; and the colossal tragedies of the two gigantic world-wars following one upon the other within less than a generation, and the insensible and brutal internecine conflicts and clashes, the fatal poisonous atmosphere, born of jealousy and mistrust, begotry and fanaticism that threaten to assume catastrophic proportions in India, in spite of her tradition of toleration and religion of love and amity swaying the people's mind from time immemorial, have merely intensified and accelerated the crisis. The West has been following the cult of materialism and has adapted its philosophy of life to it ; its education and culture, naturally, bear the impress of materialism at its zenith ; and just as materialism must fail to find a synthesis and reach a serene maturity, so its education must lack the 'inspiring unity', and its culture, that essential rational aim and spiritual basis, without which all ascendancy, progress and power which the most concentrated and

elaborate pursuit of materialism can bring, seem to be empty and meaningless. And India facing as she does a great crisis in her history with darkening clouds and chaos all round, in spite of her glorious spiritual heritage and tradition of unique religious triumphs and of the highest cultural level as yet attained by Man, cannot depend, as Dr. Sadler and his colleagues pointed out, upon the West for a synthesis in her culture and for the 'inspiring unity in her intellectual aim', for the paramount, unifying principle in her education ; smitten with communal viras, torn asunder with sectarian and party factions, with the spiritual basis of her civilization and culture, her very basic unity and solidarity, threatened with disruption, with her Godless, soulless, lifeless education, a bad imitation of the western model (itself suffering from the lack of the essential unity), India, and Bengal too, has got to find in her national culture and her pristine religion the essential unity of her intellectual aim, and the synthesis in the conflicting cultures and ideologies accentuating the communal and sectarian discords which to-day are a grave menace to her destiny. It is in the heart of her own ancient culture and religion that the inspiration and guidance for a speedy resolution of the terrible, sickening crisis—a crisis which is soiling her glorious tradition and is a blot in her history—have to be sought ; and the new education, the educational centres and system reconstructed and renovated, have got to be harnessed to the big task.

But in order that India might begin a new epoch of progress and harmony, the new education and culture in India must steer clear of the dangerous perils and shoals that have practically frustrated the mission of education and culture both in the East and in the West. Education and culture that will have to be built in place of the old and existing imitations which we all hug to our bosom as the real must

be grounded on, and hold fast to, Truth—the supreme truths of life which the West have practically discarded and which the East—and India—has seriously neglected in the later epochs of her history—so that education will not have to suffer from the lack of the essential unity of aim and purpose, and culture from the indispensable living principle of synthesis. In order to understand how the East and West have reacted to the supreme Truth we have only to go to one who to-day is the world's centre of illumination—to grasp the prophetic words of one who is the herald of 'the life divine', the inspired seer of modern world—Sri Aurobindo\* : “ . . . All philosophy is concerned with the relations between two things, the fundamental truth of existence and the forms in which existence presents itself to our experience. The deepest experience shows that the fundamental truth is truth of the spirit ; the other is the truth of life, truth of form and shaping force and living idea and action. Here the West and East have followed divergent lines. The West has laid most emphasis on truth of life and for a time come to stake its whole existence upon truth of life alone, to deny the existence of spirit or to relegate it to the domain of the unknown and unknowable ; from that exaggeration it is now beginning to return. The East has laid most emphasis on truth of the spirit and for a time came, at least in India, to stake its whole existence upon that truth alone, to neglect the possibilities of life or to limit it to a narrow development on a fixed status. The East too is beginning to return from this exaggeration. The West is reawaking to the truth of the spirit and spiritual possibilities of life, the East is reawaking to the truth of life and tends towards a new application to it of its spiritual knowledge. . . . To grow into the fulness of the

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\*Sri Aurobindo: The Ideal of Human Unity, 1919.

divine is the true law of human life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. . .”

Thus if ‘to grow into the divine’ is not only the loftiest and grandest ideal before the humanity but is the ‘true law of human life’ ; if this is the highest, but ultimate reaction of the humanity in the individual and race to the ultimate Reality, our education and culture must also respond to, and reflect, this supreme ‘law of human life’. There is only one way through which Man can reach and be re-born into, can be redeemed by the lustre of, the divine ; it is through religion and spirituality, not in the narrow sense of a rigid sectarianism and blind dogma but in the broadest sense of the terms. And India, through good report and evil, through the spring tide of brilliance, or the dark winter, in her history, has had one ‘particular ideal’ in the words of Swami Vivekananda—“a prominent ideal running through and guiding its whole life and ‘in this lies the backbone of its national life. Neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, furnishes India with that backbone, but religion, and religion alone, is all that we have and mean to have. For spirituality has always been ours in India. . . .’”\*

India’s indigenous educational systems and her cultural centres have always respected, and reacted to, this religious ideal and spiritual outlook and aim, through the ages ; as Dr. Sadler and his colleagues admit at the very beginning of their Report: “Thus among the literate Hindu castes and the Musalmans, the traditional systems of learning were exclusively literary and religious in character.” But when, under the benign British rule, the time-honoured economy of India’s internal life and freedom were broken into fragments, her social structure was shaken to its foundation

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\*Vivekananda: Address at Pamban.

and her educational systems were shattered, the ancient 'religious character' and spiritual background and tradition of her education were demolished to make room for the new deity of religious neutrality to suit the exigencies of British rule. Thus our education, divorced from the 'true law of human life', detaching itself from the 'fundamental truth of the spirit', and leaving the main currents of our national life and thought has bred a race of renegades and invertibrates, has failed to 'make men' and 'form character'—and thus failed in its highest and most important mission. Hence in order to help in the emergence of the ruling and sustaining synthesis in the chaos of conflicting cultures, and of the inspiring dynamic unity in the anarchy of individual and racial and sectarian aims and ends, we have to restore the 'religious character' to our education, we have to bring back its spiritual outlook and background. And what after all religion aims at and strives after, that we should set about the urgent task of re-ordering our education in the light of religious ideal and in the lustre of spiritual ends? We might say in the pregnant words of Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, . . . "The divinising of the life of man in the individual and the race is the dream of the great religions. It is the moksa of the Hindus, the nirvana of the Buddhists, the kingdom of heaven of the Christians. It is for Plato the life of the untroubled perception of the pure idea. It is the realization of one's native form, the restoration of one's integrity of being. Tada drastuh svarupe aasthanam, as the Yogasutra has it. Heaven is not a place where God lives, but an order of being, a world of spirit where the ideas of wisdom, love and beauty exist eternally, a kingdom into which we may all enter at once in spirit, which we may realize fully in ourselves and in society, though only in long and patient effort."\* Thus

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\*Radhakrishnan: An Idealist View of Life.

the divinising of the life of man in the individual and the race which has been the cherished 'dream of the great religions' of the world, had not simply been the Ideal, unattainable and elusive, but the principal aim and object in education, which had been an accomplished fact in the India of yore, and even in the India of to-day, to a very limited extent.

But if our education, the new education of the morrow, were simply to react to the crying economic needs of the country, and be responsive only to the compelling necessities of our commercial age, without caring to reflect, and respond in its progress and development, the spiritual tradition and religious ideals of our country, it will merely be a replica of the present soulless, lifeless education ; it will suffer from the same lack of inspiring unity in intellectual aim and cultural progress, from the absence of the same synthesis, which has to-day aggravated the cultural conflict and spiritual crisis both in the West and in the East, in India. Here again, in this critical juncture, on this crucial question—affecting our progress, and even our survival as a nation—that inspired prophet of a new philosophy of life—Mahatma Gandhi—has given us a lead. His is the only solution for our cultural conflict and spiritual crisis. But the solution, like many other great Truths, has a tremendous simplicity. As we have already said, Mahatma Gandhi insists,\* “. . . The students will have to study all Indian religions. The Hindus should familiarise themselves with the Koran and Mussulmans with the Shastras. . .” Mahatma himself said,\* “. . . A new culture should be constructed on the foundations of the past. . . It ought to be a synthesis of the different civilizations which have influenced India and have become naturalised here. . . Each culture will have its legitimate

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\*Romain Rolland: Mahatma Gandhi.



place in our system" (of education). . . The hydraheaded monster of communalism and sectarianism which is a menace to India's political as well as cultural progress cannot be done away with except by an appeal to, and bringing out, the highest and noblest in Man, except by opening his eyes, to the supreme truth of Life and the 'fundamental truth of the spirit', to the eternal Vedantic Truth—*Ekam sat Vipra bahudha badanti*—which in the words of Vivekananda means: 'He Who exists is one ; the sages call Him variously.' In the ancient times when rivers of human blood were freely shed over the question of superiority of this tribal god or that, India had proclaimed this grandest and sublimest Truth and to this Truth India has stuck in spite of the diversity of her creeds and sects. ". . . for us Hindus this truth has been the very backbone of our national existence. For down through vistas of centuries of our national life this one idea has come upon us, gaining in volume and in fulness till it has permeated the whole of our national existence. . ."\* It is because of the age-old sway of this supreme truth over our life, our culture and religion that India has been the one land on earth where the Hindus have not desecrated their culture and tradition with religious persecution but have built temples and churches for other religions. But at this critical juncture in India's history, in world-history, will the Indians forget their respect for others' religion and forget the tremendous Truth of Vedanta *Ekam sat Vipra bahudha badanti* and the massive monistic Truth expressed in the Gita,† the Truth namely, those who worship other gods devoutly worship God but in an irregularly way? If not, the Indians will follow Mahatma Gandhi's lead, the Hindus will study the Koran and the Mussalmans, the Shastras. As regards the

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\*Vivekananda.

†The 9th Canto slok XXIII.

noble task of studying the sublime tenets of Christianity, the question really does not arise ; India has never been lacking in the rightful and reverent appreciation of, and in paying her soulful homage to, Christianity ; the world has yet to see greater and more brilliant exponents of Christianity than Mahatma Gandhi and Brahmananda Kesob Chandra. If India is to survive her present crisis in the political, social and cultural spheres, if she is to be released from the octopus-grip of the ugly sectarian bigotry and communal fanaticism—which are to-day the most serious menace to her progress—if India is once again to see not only the dawn but the noon of her resurrection, and thus fulfil her glorious destiny of heralding a new epoch of peace and serenity, and spiritual culture, if Civilization is to be rationalized and spiritualized and a synthesis found, for its jarring notes and disastrous conflicts, India has to begin anew the evolution of a spiritual<sup>4</sup> and religious synthesis through education and culture.

India must discard the policy of religious neutrality in public education but teach her young the glories and beauties of the religions that 'have flourished in India' and follow Mahatma Gandhi's ideal. If the Hindus and Mahammadans, Christians and Parsis, can catch the real spirit of their respective religion and can re-order their lives in the light of the truths enunciated therein, all the ugly sectarianism and communalism will vanish like vapour before the blazing sun. We have all to realize that the different religions—not only of the civilized but also of the primitive and the barbarous tribes—represent the different reactions of human soul, and constitute the different ways of orientation of human relations, to the supreme. The sooner we realize it, the better for us, and the humanity. And when our minds are fresh and budding and comparatively pure and simple, with their receptive power

practically intact—in our student life—we ought to learn to love and respect our neighbour's religion, as we must ours ; through mythology and allegory, through epics and lyrics, the boys and girls must learn in their school and college days that "the supreme presents itself in a variety of aspects to the human mind.\*. . ."

Standing in the midst of what cannot but be the shattering of a dazzling world-order and, in the midst of the ruins of a dominant, brilliant but suicidal culture, one has to probe 'these surfaces of life' into the needs of the new age which is verily knocking at our door ; in this critical moment, when we have to think furiously over the reconstruction of our education and culture in the light of the needs and ideals of the coming age, "We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy which will meet the needs of the new age. The religion of the future must be a comprehensive one embracing within its scope all those who are religious-minded in sentiment, allowing them full liberty so far as creeds and thought-pictures are concerned. For religion is not so much a theory of the supernatural as an attitude of spirit, a temper of mind."\* It is in the temple of learning, in our educational institutions that this 'religion of the future' which will have scope for 'all those who are religious-minded allowing them full liberty' of 'creeds and thought-pictures' will have to be built. "The ideals of a new age call insistently for a new purpose in education. India for her own sake and for the sake of others, should bring her wisdom and experience to a task in which every nation is called to share. . . .† But in order to bring 'her wisdom and experience to the task' of building of the new humanity and the new world-order, she has got to re-build her own temple of learning and work

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\*Radhakrishnan: *Kalki* or The Future of Civilization.

†Report of the Calcutta University Commission: Vol. I.

out the 'new purpose in education' in accordance with the 'ideals of a new age'. India, with the ideals of a new age and the dawn of a new epoch calling her to action, to rise to the full height of her pristine glory, cannot afford to suffer any longer from the lack of a synthesis and harmony in her culture, and of a dynamic, divinising force in her education. Indeed it is up to India to build this synthesis—first in her academic life and on the enduring foundation of the glories and beauties in the different religions and cultures which have found their home in India and to 'divinise' the mind of the young with the redeeming message of the different religions so that a new humanity may rise on the new dynamic synthesis, and be not lost in the whirlpool of the present spiritual crisis and religious and cultural conflicts. For, in the prophetic words of Sri Aurobindo, we "of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. . . We do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future. . . We have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism but to take full account of the potent, though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking."\* And the work of this 'assimilation' must be begun in the educational and cultural centres.

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\*Sri Aurobindo: The Essays on The Gita.

## APPENDIX A

### *Resolution of Bengal Secondary Education Bill Protest Conference, December, 1940.*

This Conference expresses its strong condemnation of the Bengal Secondary Education Bill, 1940, on the following, among other grounds:—

(1) The Bill makes the interest of Education subservient to political and communal considerations, and completely ignores the academic and cultural point of view which is absolutely essential to the building up of a sound system of National Education.

(2) The Bill is designed to officialise Secondary Education and to place it under complete Government control. It aims at stifling private enterprise and initiative which have so far been mainly responsible for the establishment and maintenance of Secondary Schools and for the development of Secondary Education in Bengal.

(3) The Bill indicates no plan for the expansion of Secondary Education and makes no provision whatsoever for the organisation and development of technical, industrial, vocational and agricultural education, the need for which at the secondary stage has been widely and urgently felt.

(4) The financial provision made in the Bill is totally inadequate for the purpose of giving assistance to the secondary schools without which no reform or development is possible.

(5) The constitution of the proposed Board is extremely unsatisfactory. The Bill entirely overlooks the necessity of securing the services of independent educational experts. It totally excludes the representation of teachers on the Executive Council and gives them inadequate representation on the Board and the Committees. It does not provide for any representation on the Board of the Managing Committees or of guardians or of the public interested in education. The representation given to Calcutta University is extremely inadequate.

(6) Instead of simplifying the administration of Secondary Education the Bill makes the administrative machinery complex and cumbrous.

(7) The Bill is bound to lead to a severe curtailment of the existing educational facilities for secondary education in Bengal and the provision of the Bill regarding the automatic withdrawal of recognition to deal a death-blow to the educational progress of the people.

(8) The Bill is specially designed to cripple the educational interests of Hindus of Bengal, who supply about 75 per cent of the pupils and even a larger percentage of the funds of the secondary schools in the province. The proposed Board will not inspire public confidence because a large number of its members would be chosen not as representatives of academic interests but as belonging to the Moslem Community, in spite of the fact that most of the secondary schools of Bengal have been founded and maintained by persons belonging to the Hindu Community.

(9) The Bill gives unjustifiably large representation to the Europeans, although there exists a separate Statutory Board for European and Anglo-Indian Education.

(10) The Bill seeks to introduce an anomaly by leaving the conduct of the Matriculation Examination in the hands of the Calcutta University while depriving the University of its right to prepare the syllabus and to select and publish the text-books for the Examination. It will cripple the University financially, thereby seriously threatening the interests of higher education.

(11) The Bill places the preparation and publication of text-books in the hands of Special Committees which are predominantly communal in character. Such an arrangement will be creating an undesirable monopoly leading to a serious deterioration in the standard and quality of text-books. The Bill will seriously affect the integrity of the Bengali language and literature and will destroy the culture of the province, the manifestations of which are already clearly visible in the existing text-books approved by the Education Department now under communal influence.

(12) The Bill in all its essential features is contrary to the recommendations of the Sadler Commission and does not satisfy the conditions precedent to the formation of a Secondary Board as laid down by the Commission on whose report the Government professes to take their stand.

The Conference, therefore, demands the immediate withdrawal of the Bill.

## APPENDIX B

*The Bengal Secondary Education Bill, 1940\**

WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the regulation and control of secondary education ;

1. (1) This Act may be called the Bengal Secondary Education Act, 1940.

3. (1) The Provincial Government shall constitute a Board for the regulation and control of secondary education.

4. The Board shall consist of fifty members, including the following:—

(1) the President, to be appointed by the Provincial Government ;

(2) the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, *ex-officio* ;

(3) the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dacca, *ex-officio* ;

(5) the Assistant Director of Public Instruction for Muslim Education, *ex-officio* ;

(6) the Inspector of European Schools, *ex-officio* ;

(7) the Director of Physical Education, *ex-officio* ;

16. (1) The Provincial Government may, by notification, empower the Board to appoint such persons as the Board considers necessary for the inspection of secondary schools and for the performance of any clerical or menial duties in connection with such inspection, and the persons so appointed shall be officers and servants of the Board.

18. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Board shall have power to direct, supervise and control secondary education, and to do all such acts as it may consider necessary for the purposes of such direction, supervision and control.

19. (1) The Board shall constitute an executive Council, which shall be composed of fourteen Members including:—

(a) the President, *ex-officio* ;

(b) the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, *ex-officio* ;

(c) the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dacca, *ex-officio* ;

(d) the Director of Public Instruction, *ex-officio* ;

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\*Relevant sections only are given.

- (e) the Assistant Director of Public 'Instruction for Muslim Education, *ex-officio* ;
- (2) The President shall be the Chairman of the Executive Council.
20. (1) Subject to the provisions of section 18, the Executive Council shall have power to—
- (i) grant or refuse approval to secondary schools, maintain a register of approved secondary schools, and withdraw such approval if it thinks fit ;
  - (ii) distribute grants-in-aid to secondary schools in accordance with such regulations as may be made by the Board in this behalf ;
  - (iii) in accordance with such regulations as may be made by the Board in this behalf, recognize secondary schools for the purpose of presenting candidates for examination of the University of Calcutta, and withdraw such recognition if it thinks fit.
23. (1) The Board shall constitute a Scheduled Castes Secondary Education Committee.
- (3) It shall be the duty of the Committee to advise the Board and the Executive Council on all matters relating to the education of members of Scheduled Castes in secondary schools.
24. (1) The Board shall constitute a Finance Committee.
- (2) The President shall be the Chairman of the Committee.
- (3) It shall be the duty of the Committee to prepare the budget of the Board, and to perform such other functions as the Board may from time to time direct.
25. (1) The Board shall constitute a Publications Committee.
26. (1) The Board shall constitute a Matriculation Syllabus Committee.
29. (1) The executive authority of the Board and of the Executive Council shall vest in the President, who shall be responsible for carrying out and giving effect to the orders of the Board, the Executive Council and of any Committee constituted under this Act.
33. For the purpose of enabling the Board to perform its functions under this Act, the Provincial Government shall pay to the Board in each financial year—



(a) a sum of twenty-five lakhs of rupees, and

(b) a further sum not exceeding one lakh of rupees for the maintenance of the Board and its officers and servants:

34. (1) All sums received by the Board or the Executive Council shall be paid into a Fund to be called the Secondary Education Fund, to which shall be credited—

(a) all sums paid by the Provincial Government for the purpose of enabling the Board to perform its functions under this Act ;

(b) all fees realized under any of the provisions of this Act ;

(c) all sums representing income from endowments or from property owned or managed by the Board for the purposes of this Act ;

(d) all sums received from the sale of publications under this Act ; and

(e) all other sums received by the Board for any purpose provided in this Act.

(2) The Secondary Education Fund shall vest in the Board, shall be under its control and shall be held by it in trust for the purposes of this Act.

38. . . . . the auditor shall submit to the Provincial Government a report on the accounts audited, . . . . .

40. Any person interested in the Secondary Education Fund may, in the prescribed manner, prefer an objection in writing to the accounts submitted to the auditor.

45. The Provincial Government may, by order in writing, suspend the execution of any resolution or order of the Board, the Executive Council or any Committee constituted under this Act, and prohibit the doing of any act which purports to be done or to be intended to be done under this Act, if in the opinion of the Provincial Government such resolution, order or act is in excess of the powers conferred by or under this Act upon the Board, the Executive Council or such Committee, as the case may be.

46. (1) If in the opinion of the Provincial Government the Board has shown its incompetence to perform, or persistently made default in the performance of, the duties imposed or exceeded or abused the powers conferred upon it by or under this Act, the Provincial Government may, by notification specifying the

reasons therefor, remove the elected and, appointed members of the Board and direct that the Board be reconstituted by a fresh election and appointment of members in accordance with the provisions of section 4.

(2) Until the Board is reconstituted as directed under sub-section (1) the powers and duties of the Board shall be exercised and performed by, and the property vested in the Board shall vest in, such person as the Provincial Government may specify in the said notification.

47. The Provincial Government may by notification exempt any secondary school or class of secondary schools, or any student or class of students in any secondary school, from the operation of all or any of the provisions of this Act, and the Powers of the Board, of the Executive Council and of any Committee constituted under this Act shall be deemed to be limited in proportion to the extent of such notification.

52. Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Universities Act, 1904, or in any regulation made thereunder—

- (1) a secondary school which has not been approved by the Executive Council under section 29 shall not be recognised by the University of Calcutta for the purpose of presenting candidates for the matriculation examination of the said university ;
- (2) no candidate shall, without the permission of the Executive Council under section 20, present himself for the matriculation examination of the said University ;
- (3) save in accordance with the decisions of the Matriculation Syllabus Committee constituted under section 26, the said University shall not specify any syllabus for the said matriculation examination ; and
- (4) the said University shall not specify or publish any text book or other publication for use in any secondary school.

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